South Haven Tribune

$3

April 12, 2026

Urgent care facility coming to SH Twp.

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — An urgent care facility is in the works to be built in South Haven Township, starting this year.

The South Haven Township board received a presentation about the facility from Corewell Health Southwest Michigan President Natalie Baggio during Wednesday's meeting.

"This shows a representation of what our architects have been working on with (Supervisor) Ross (Stein) and the team here is developing a 15,000-square-foot integrated care campus," Baggio said. "What that means is, it's more than one type of care."

The proposed facility would have between 23 and 25 rooms and include primary care, specialty care and an urgent care.

"Our goal is to have that full complement of what we know the community needs in some sort of capacity," Baggio said. "Like the high utilizations around cardiology, orthopedics, urology (and) ENT."

Baggio said she is working with the township to finalize a land purchase agreement of 71989 County Road 388, to build this project.

"With this being an aging population, getting to appointments is just difficult," Stein said. "So, having something like this in the community, it's going to be a wonderful asset."

The tentative construction start date is set for July.

Lighthouse Ridge

The board approved an amendment to the Lighthouse Ridge percent payment in lieu of the taxes (PILOT) agreement.

During the February township meeting, Senior Development Manager Graham Welling from Wallick Communities presented a few options to trustees of how to fill the $1 million gap that was left after they did not receive a grant for the project.

During the March meeting, Development Manager Brennon Davis said they decided to pursue the option to lower the current PILOT from 4 percent to 1 percent.

The board previously approved a 4 percent PILOT program for the project.

The project will include 52 units in three residential buildings and a community building. There will be a mix of two- and three-bedroom apartments, which will aim to cover up to 80

See URGENT CARE, page A2

Photos provided

The South Haven Center for the Arts is showcasing local middle and high school student's art in a special exhibition including "Sweet Deception" by Lexi Shugg.

A new perspective | Student artwork shines at South Haven art exhibition

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Center for the Arts celebrated the opening of the "Perspective: Middle and High School Art Exhibition" on Friday.

According to a news release, the artwork included sculptures, ceramics, drawings, paintings, collages, fiber arts and digital art.

The work of middle school and high school students will be exhibited at the center for the arts from April 4 through May 2.

"This is a great opportunity for the students to showcase their talent," South Haven Center for the Art's Board President Genie Crotte said in the release. "This is my favorite show, actually! These student exhibitions have been a key program of the center's mission for over 30 years."

High school student artwork will be exhibited from South Haven, Covert and Bangor high schools and Van Buren Tech Center. Middle school artists' work will be exhibited from St. Paul's, South Haven, Baseline, Bangor and Covert middle schools.

Additionally, Paw Paw High School and Decatur schools will be joining the exhibition for the first time. Area homeschooled students also are participating in the exhibition.

Photo provided

South Haven High School student Trinity Sistrunk's art piece entitled "Our Self-Portrait" is part of The South Haven Center for the Arts new exhibition.

The center for the arts will have drop-in activities during the run of the exhibition for families including the Van Buren Youth Initiative classes for middle and high school aged artists.

This exhibition is made possible due to art teachers Colleen Anastacio at Baseline Middle School, Madeline Finn teaching in South Haven High School, Kelsey Vollrath at Covert Public Schools, Jennifer Nesbitt and Angela Rueff at Bangor Public Schools, Julie Stegman at St. Paul Lutheran School, Sarah Bentley at Paw Paw High School, Tamara Schoonbeck at Decatur Schools, Kelly Vander Kley and Tracy Wendt at Van Buren Tech.

"Perspective" is sponsored by South Haven Public Schools and made possible in part through funding from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council and Edward Jones Office of Paul Hix.

The South Haven Center for the Arts is free and open to the public from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Thursday.

For more information go to southhavenarts.org or south havenarts on Facebook and instagram.

To contact the center directly, email info@south havenarts.org or call 269-637-1041.

SH council reviews this year's priorities

Council member adds health care facility to wishlist

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven City Council reviewed its strategic planning report and discussed what the 2026-27 priorities should be this week.

The city council previously discussed the priorities at the Committee of the Whole meeting on March 16.

The proposed priorities included:

■ Lifeguards: Continued development and implementation of the lifeguard program.

■ Short-term rentals: Continued implementation and enforcement of the new short-term rental licensing program.

■ Housing: As an initial step city staff would develop a housing action plan for the council's review. The housing action plan would set objectives, identify issues, and review regional opportunities for growth and development.

The plan would also include priority objectives, related costs, timelines and measures of success. The council approved housing action plan would constitute the council's guidance document for this priority.

"I think it's important that we add medical facilities or urgent care," Council Member Tom Capps said. "Even if urgent care isn't something that we get done, maybe a township may do something. That I think is something that we should make a priority that we look into what other medical facilities we might be able to endeavor here in South Haven."

During Monday's meeting, the council discussed setting up a meeting to talk to Bronson about how to get an

See PRIORITIES, page A6

A first for Michigan's $2.4B SOAR business incentive program: New jobs

By PAULA GARDNER
Bridge Michigan

Michigan's embattled $2.4 billion business incentive program has spurred controversy, but last year it began generating something new: Jobs.

Reports submitted to the state for the Strategic Outreach and Attraction Reserve (SOAR) Fund show that 1,846 jobs were created in 2025 among 10 companies awarded a collective $1.74 billion in large taxpayer subsidies.

That's less than 13 percent of the 14,559 new jobs various firms promised to create over the course of several years under SOAR agreements with the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

But the new jobs represent the first hiring under Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's flagship corporate incentive program since it launched in 2022 following bipartisan support in the state Legislature.

Dow Inc. also retained 5,028 jobs, staying on pace to keep at least 5,000 jobs in Michigan through 2032 in exchange for a $120 million grant to modernize two Midland-area facilities.

Including Dow, companies awarded SOAR subsidies have promised to create or retain a total of 19,599 jobs.

The new hiring didn't stop lawmakers from defunding SOAR for this budget year. Republicans and some Democrats are scrutinizing taxpayer subsidies after years of questioning whether the billions spent are worth it.

"Large checks are not necessarily going to fix everything," Rep. Jasper Martus, D-Flushing, said of how views on economic development policy have changed.

But MEDC spokesperson Danielle Emerson counters

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The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

SOAR

From page A1

that the scale of the investment reflects the scope of the massive SOAR projects. Hiring, she said, was always expected to take years.

"We have every confidence it will continue to happen," Emerson told Bridge Michigan. "These are good-paying jobs with important economic impacts to the communities they are in."

That's the case in Saginaw County's Richland Township, where Corning subsidiary Solar Technology LLC is finishing its 1 million-square-foot factory close to Hemlock Semiconductor, another Corning-related company.

Solar Technology received a $68 million award through SOAR, plus another $29 million earmarked for utility upgrades to support its new solar energy component factory. The firm was expected to create 1,151 new jobs. So far, it has added 1,244, about 100 more than promised, at an average pay of $55,223.

A company spokesperson told Bridge the SOAR grant helped the firm hire ahead of schedule.

Work on the factory involved a "long haul" of at least three years, Township Manager Rob Grose told Bridge. But so far, Grose added, results show "it's been a great asset to the community."

The data

Bridge Michigan tallied the SOAR results from years of MEDC reports, the most recent coming in March and reflecting the latest available data. This report also uses documents received through Michigan's Freedom of Information Act.

Records for SOAR show:

■ The state has awarded companies a combined $1.86 billion, including direct payments and related site improvement. It has so far spent $1 billion of that.

■ Another $660 million was awarded to economic development groups for site readiness without a specific company in mind. That includes $259 million to create a speculative megasite near Flint.

■ Companies promised a combined 19,599 new or retained jobs in exchange for the subsidies.

■ So far, various firms have created 1,846 jobs. Dow also retained 5,028 jobs, bringing the year's total to 6,874 new or retained jobs

■ The awards were initially projected to spur $18.7 billion in corporate investments in Michigan, a figure reduced to $10.7 billion after companies changed plans. Among them: A $3.5 billion drop in expected spending by General Motors and LG Energy Solution.

Hiring to date reflects a cost per new job of about $795,000 based on still-active job-creation incentive awards and recent company reports to the state. If all jobs are realized from the active projects, that cost will drop to about $160,000 per new job.

Those figures don't include non-SOAR subsidies that may have also been awarded to projects, such as tax breaks.

Since the SOAR awards launched in January 2022, many of the deals changed as the incentive program evolved in a volatile business and federal policy climate. Electric vehicles, for example, were much of the original focus, but automaker shifts in production plans slowed plans.

Devin Anderson-Torrez / Kalamazoo Gazette

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer delivers the State of the State address at the Michigan Capitol Building in Lansing onFeb. 25.

"We remain encouraged by the hiring activity across projects even as so much has changed at the national and international levels since the SOAR fund was first created," the MEDC's Emerson said.

Ford Motor Co. did not pursue its first SOAR award, made in part to support electrification upgrades across several factories. The company also put its $3.5 billion battery factory in Marshall on hold for some time before downsizing.

Now it expects a $2.5 billion investment and 1,700 hires there. The company's SOAR awards were reduced by about $70 million to $326.3 million.

Last year's hiring counted 146 new workers at the Ford BlueOval Michigan factory, where the automaker now plans to use some of the new EV battery capacity to produce energy storage systems. Most of the hires are administrative, the company told the state.

The factory on 500 acres will open this year, Ford has said, and hiring continues. Among open positions are jobs ranging from security guard to several manufacturing engineers. Average pay so far, Ford reported to the state, is $75,000 per year.

More than 70 percent of the new workers come from Marshall as well as nearby Albion and Battle Creek, Ford said in a recent newsletter.

The company "is proud to hire team members from the communities surrounding the site," Ford said in a statement in early March.

Jobs expected to increase

A 2.8 million-square-foot LG Energy battery factory near Lansing is among SOAR-funded projects where hiring is expected to increase. The new factory was part of the first large-scale state incentive in 2022, when it was part of an Ultium Cells EV battery partnership between LG and General Motors.

GM sold the battery factory to its partner, and the state transferred the $120 million cash SOAR award to LG. The battery-maker, in turn, shifted production from EV batteries to energy storage systems.

In March, LG announced a $4.3 billion contract with Tesla. The company has reported hiring 408 of the SOAR-required 1,360 workers, with regular production planned to start this quarter.

GM also promises eventual hiring after it again retools its Orion Assembly factory in Oakland County. The site had been planned for EVs but now will produce gas-fueled trucks and SUVs.

GM has started an "initial wave of onboarding," it told the state last fall. It forecasts about 1,500 workers in the factory by year-end as production starts in the first quarter of 2027. The company received $480 million from SOAR.

Our Next Energy in Van Buren Township pivoted from EV batteries to energy storage systems. The company did not respond to Bridge's request for comment, but it told the state it is "actively servicing the defense sector."

The company – which received $70 million of $200 million promised through SOAR – reported 48 hires so far. Its promised target is 2,112 by the end of 2029.

However, Our Next Energy also laid off 29 workers at its Oakland County headquarters and is no longer planning to use about two-thirds of its 659,589-square-foot battery gigafactory. The state has said the SOAR funding has been paused as the company repositions its business.

No jobs yet

Several other projects, including the canceled Ford plan, have not moved toward delivering jobs to the state.

Detroit Diesel received a $27.7 million award to add 436 jobs at its factory in Redford Township and Detroit. Its contract was signed in December, according to the MEDC, so it is not yet part of the annual fiscal year reporting.

Gotion Inc. was awarded $175 million through SOAR, but the state canceled the agreement – and seeks the return of $50 million that was disbursed – last fall after it said the company fell into default by not making progress on its EV battery factory near Big Rapids.

Two other projects remain approved but unfunded: Highland Copper's $50 million award for a copper mine in the Upper Peninsula has not made it through appropriations committees, though the company says it is still pursuing funding. Efforts by some lawmakers to arrange other funding for the controversial funding did not work last fall.

The University of Michigan has not finalized its contract worth $100 million. However, it still plans a controversial $1.2 billion data center for research in Ypsilanti Township, officials told Bridge in March.

U-M, Gotion and the canceled Ford project account for about 5,900 promised jobs – about 30 percent of the expected hiring from all company-specific SOAR deals. They also represent $5.1 billion expected from company investments.

Looking ahead

About $651 million in SOAR funding remained available to the state from $2.4 billion in budget authorizations, according to the House Fiscal Agency in January.

Dissatisfaction with Michigan high-dollar economic development subsidies has escalated since 2022 among Democrats and Republicans, culminating in lawmakers eliminating it from this year's budget.

Speaker Matt Hall, R-Richland Township, is calling to repeal SOAR so that it can't be revived in the future.

Whitmer already seeks another $150 million in site-readiness SOAR money through her supplemental budget request from February. Of that, $100 million would be for an undetermined company.

But public backlash to many of the projects – including litigation over zoning in both Marshall and near Big Rapids – keeps the Legislature cautious about further support.

"I think the people of Michigan are starting to become more and more fed up with these failed economic decisions," Rep. Steve Carra, R-Three Rivers, told Bridge. Lawmakers, too, are "more averse to them than I've ever seen."

Job creation is only one part of what the state should demand in accountability, Rep. Brian BeGole, R-Perry, told Bridge.

"The promises made and the promises not kept" are an issue, he said, raising concerns about GM selling its share of the battery factory to LG while not returning the state's $120 million. Another concern is that Attorney General Dana Nessel is seeking a reimbursement from Gotion, which is challenging the state for cutting off its project.

But Emerson, of the MEDC, said the state is starting to realize the benefits from the massive awards that she described as "transformational."

"There is so much more to these multi-year projects than just the hiring at the facility," she said, mentioning local business hiring and construction costs.

"These projects were never about instant results, rather anchoring investments that will deliver opportunity for decades to come."

Job creation is only one part of what the state should demand in accountability, Rep. Brian BeGole, R-Perry, told Bridge.

OBITUARIES

Lawrence Zeppiero

June 19, 1947 – April 5, 2026

Lawrence "Zep" Anthony Zeppiero, 78, passed away on Saturday, April 5, 2026, at South Haven Hospital. He was born on June 19, 1947 to the late Donald and Lorraine (Hallas) Zeppiero of Chicago.

His family had a summer home in South Haven and Larry loved the area. Larry graduated from Brother Rice in Chicago and then trade school. For several years he worked as a pipe fitter/welder.

In 1982, Larry took over D & L Sales when his father passed away. With this business, Larry found his passion in life. He worked there every day. He always had time to talk to his customers.

Larry married his wife, Donna Tollensdorf, in Florida on February 23, 1988. She survives along with his two dogs, Chester and Sagan. Zep loved his dogs.

He was also survived by his sister, Suzette Gacek. Also surviving are two nephews, Andrew (Tiffany) and Jonathan (Marlo) Gacek.

Zep enjoyed working, deep-sea fishing, visits to Las Vegas, his dogs, regular visits to Hawkshead and Taste and talking to his many friends around town.

There will be a celebration of life service planned for a later date after cremation takes place.

Those wishing to share a memory of Lawrence online may do so at www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Lucille Dalecki

June 22, 1940 – April 8, 2026

Lucille Estelle Dalecki, age 85, of South Haven, Mich., passed away Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at Bronson Hospital.

Lucille was born June 22, 1940 in New Haven Conn., daughter of the late Joseph and Germaine Bouffard and had lived in Michigan since 1989.

She enjoyed and loved her family very much, especially spending time with her grand and great-grandchildren. Lucille was known for her sass and love. She was an amazing cook and also enjoyed birding, sewing, dancing and quilting. She was a proud member of the cozy quilters. Lucille was an active volunteer in South Haven for many years.

Surviving are her four children, Lanna (Ray) Gawel of South Haven, Robert (Peggy) Dalecki II of South Haven, George (Rebecca) Dalecki of Paw Paw, Mich. and Laura (Kelly) Vincent of South Bend, Ind.; 8 grandchildren, Nicholas, Krystal, Kelsey, Troy, Meaghan, Emily, Sarah and Connor; 10 great-grandchildren; sister, Rose (Robert) Bartolomeo of Myrtle Beach, S.C.; brother, Ernest (Kate) Bouffard of Hamden, Conn; many nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

The family will meet friends from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 12 at the Bangor Chapel, D. L. Miller Funeral Home, www.dlmillerfuneralhome.com.

Mass of Christian burial will take place at 11 a.m. on Monday, April 13 at St. Basil Catholic Church, Rev. Fr. Jacob Sundararaju officiating. Interment will follow in Monks Cemetery.

The family suggests memorial contributions be made to The Bangor Lions.

URGENT CARE

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percent of the area median income.

The project is estimated to cost $16.2 million.

Part of the funding will come from the low income housing and tax credit that was awarded in July 2025. The funding will also come from a permanent loan, grants and subordinate or source loans.

The board approved the amendment to have the 4 percent be changed to 1 percent during Wednesday's meeting.

Other items

The board also approved the language of a new road millage ballot.

Stein said the current millage is expiring this year, so this would be a renewal of the millage with no changes. The millage is set for 1.45 mills or $384,000, which will be on the ballot for the August election.

The board later adopted a brownfield plan for SOHA Drift Lofts. The project will have 45 condominiums with amenities including a tennis court, pool, pickleball court and a community building.

One of the developers of the project, Dan Crist, said the project is expected to take three years to finish.

Brownfield Program Manager David Stegink said the brownfield is not a contaminated property and can be used for residential development.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Vessel & Espera!
Espera and Vessel are 7-month-old sisters with sweet personalities and a special bond. These two love nothing more than curling up together in a cozy bed or watching birds out the window like it's their favorite TV show. If you're looking for one sweet companion or a perfectly matched pair, Espera and Vessel are ready to fill your home with double the love. Submit an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt!

Tractor Supply Meet & Greet
Join Al-Van Humane Society every second Saturday from 12–2 PM at Tractor Supply for a casual Meet & Greet with some of our adoptable dogs. Stop by to say hello, learn more about adoption, and meet a few pups who would love to make your next Tractor Supply run a little more exciting.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST
Wet dog food and paper towels

Exceptional Heart Care

When it comes to your heart, you want the best. That's why more people choose Bronson for heart care than any other health system in southwest Michigan. Our cardiology team in Van Buren County is dedicated to quality and works closely with you and your primary care provider to develop a personalized plan of care. Whether your heart needs medical management, a procedure or surgery, when you choose one of us, you get the skill, compassion and fierce determination of a top team of experts!

Learn more at **bronsonhealth.com/heart**.

BRONSON

New paint studio opens in downtown South Haven

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed Paint Haven as a new chamber member.

According to a news release, the chamber held a ribbon cutting ceremony at Paint Haven's studio at 510 Williams Street in the heart of downtown South Haven.

"Paint Haven was created from a desire to bring meaningful, memory-making experiences to South Haven for both locals and visitors," the release stated.

Founded by a newlywed couple in 2024, the business reflects a shared vision built on creativity, hospitality and community.

"With a background in private chef services and catering, paired with experience in business and creative design, the owners have introduced a modern, elevated take on the traditional paint-and-sip experience," the release stated.

Inspired by the beauty of South Haven, many of Paint Haven's featured pieces highlight local landscapes and lakeshore charm. The studio offers a welcoming space where guests can relax, celebrate and create something unique.

"At Paint Haven, our mission is to create experiences that bring people together through creativity, connection and a touch of luxury," The owners said in the release. "We want every guest to leave not only with a piece of art, but with a meaningful memory."

More than just an art studio, Paint Haven is designed as a year-round destination for both residents and visitors. From bachelorette parties and girls' weekends to date nights, private events and family gatherings, the studio offers a fresh and vibrant experience that adds to South Haven's growing list of things to enjoy in every season.

Photos provided

Paint Haven, a year-round art studio and destination, offers a space where guests can create something unique.

The South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce recently welcomed Paint Haven as a new chamber member with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

"As a new generation of young professionals in South Haven, it means so much to be part of this community," the owners said in the release. "We're excited to contribute to the local economy and help create experiences that enhance both the resident and visitor experience year-round."

To learn more about Paint Haven, go to www.paint havensoha.com.

Hiring, career fair coming to LMC

By TRIBUNE STAFF

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Community members and Lake Michigan College students are invited to meet with employers and educators during the Red Hawk Future Fair next week.

The free hiring and career exploration open house, hosted by LMC, is being held from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 15, on the LMC Benton Harbor Campus in Rooms L-310 and L-311.

According to a news release, more than 30 Southwest Michigan employers, who are actively recruiting for full- and part-time jobs as well as internships, will be on hand to discuss openings and career pathways within their organizations.

"We are glad to welcome so many organizations to campus who are committed to growing talent in our region. Whether you're just starting out or ready for your next step, this is a great chance to meet employers face to face and learn what's out there," said Kathi Szabo, a LMC student success coach, in a news release.

Szabo said the fair is being held as part of LMC's Sustainability Week, adding a unique focus to this year's event. There is a special highlight on employers with sustainability initiatives and environmentally responsible practices. Attendees can learn how different industries are integrating sustainability into their operations and workforce practices.

Red Hawk Future Fair attendees can expect a free-flowing atmosphere where they can move between employer tables to learn about available positions. Opportunities are available across a number of industries including health care, human services, hospitality, construction and home improvement, manufacturing, local government, business and military.

University representatives will also be on hand to discuss available degree programs, campus information and application procedures for those looking to earn a bachelor's degree.

Businesses scheduled to participate include 1st Source Bank; American Red Cross of Michigan; Arrow Roofing; Artiflex Manufacturing, LLC; Beaudoin Electrical Construction; Berrien County Health Department; Berrien County Juvenile Center; Berrien County Road Department; Bronson Healthcare Group; CE Competitive Edge LLC; Corewell Health; Creative Landscaping & Design; Edustaff; Ernest Health; Fernwood Botanical Garden; FWF; Health Plus Indiana; Journeyman Distillery; Kent County; Laurel Oaks of South Haven; LOGAN Community Resources; Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; North Star Reach; Paw Paw Lake Yacht Club; Pretty Inc.; Priority1; Saint Joseph Health System; Securitas USA – Kalamazoo branch; Sturgis Band and Trust Company; Telamon Corp.; Toast Hotel Group; Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center; and U.S. Marine Corps Officer Selection.

Transfer universities scheduled to participate include Andrews University; Bethel University; Central Michigan University; Davenport University; Eastern Michigan University; Ferris State University; Grand Valley State University; Indiana University – South Bend; Oakland University; Purdue University Northwest; University of Michigan – College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; Valparaiso University; and Western Michigan University.

According to the news release, no registration is required for jobseekers. Attendees are encouraged to bring a resume and come prepared to discuss their availability and interests. The campus is located at 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Township. Free parking is available in the front student parking lot.

South Haven marinas open for season on April 15

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven municipal marinas will be open for the season on April 15.

According to a news release, facilities opening include Northside Marina, Maritime Marina, Black River Park and South Side Marina.

The Black River Park boat launch also opens to the public on April 15.

Seasonal "Prox" Cards are available for purchase at the Northside Marina Office or the customer service desk at city hall.

Available passes include:

- Day passes: $10 and may be paid by credit card at the launch gate.
- Seasonal Prox Card: $150 (unlimited use)
- Senior Rate for Prox Card (65+): $100. If the 2025 card is returned, boaters can receive a $10 discount.

Black River Park amenities include the boat launch, parking, kayak launch, restrooms, picnic area and fish cleaning station.

The Black River is considered a no-wake zone.

"Your cooperation helps keep our waterways safe and enjoyable for everyone," the release stated.

Boater safety information can be found at www.michigan.gov/dnr/things-to-do/boating/safety.

Dyckman Bridge hours can be found on the city's website at www.southhavenmi.gov.

For reservations, boaters may book online via the DNR Harbor reservation page at midnrreservations.com or by calling the marina office at 269-637-3171.

A full list of marina amenities and additional information can be found at www.southhavenmi.gov/parks_and_recreation/marinas.php.

For questions or further information, contact Harbormaster Michael Landis at 269-637-0753 or via email at mlandis@southhavenmi.gov.

SH man faces assault, weapons charges

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven police are investigating a reported sexual assault and weapons-related incident that occurred on April 1.

According to a news release, individuals reported the incident in person at the South Haven Police Department on April 2.

The individuals told police the suspect had pointed a firearm at them, physically assaulted them and committed a sexual assault at a residence located in the 1000 block of Phoenix Street.

"Officers and detectives, assisted by the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office, obtained and executed a search warrant at the residence," the release stated. "Before the warrant was carried out, the suspect was stopped during a traffic stop a few blocks away and taken into custody without incident."

Police said a 26-year-old South Haven man was lodged at the Van Buren County Jail on multiple charges, including assault with intent to commit a felony, assault with a dangerous weapon, possession of a firearm by a prohibited person, felony firearm, fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct, domestic violence and assault and battery.

The suspect's name has not ben released by police.

He is currently being held at the Van Buren County Jail, pending arraignment in the 7th District Court West.

www.southhaventribune.net

Southshore
Concert Band
and
Conductor Dale L. Reuss
present
"Dancing in the Light"
Sunday, April 19, 2026
2:00 p.m.
Lake Michigan College Mendel Center
Jenkins Theatre
FREE admission, Donations accepted
Sponsored in part by:
Huntree Nursury
Woodhams Ford of South Haven
Quinlan and Fabish Music Company
1st Source Bank and Henry's Hamburgers
www.southshoreconcertband.com

MSHDA
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

April 12, 2026

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR THE STATE OF MICHIGAN'S DRAFT ANNUAL ACTION PLAN

Prior to submission for further funding from the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Community Planning and Development, Michigan is required to publish an Annual Action Plan document for public review and comment tied to the State's five-year Consolidated Plan. The Annual Action Plan proposes an action strategy by which needs will be addressed and reflects activities undertaken between July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027.

The **comment period** will commence on Thursday, April 9, 2026, and end on Monday, May 11, 2026. **In-person public hearings** will be held on Wednesday, April 15, 2026, from 9:00-9:30a.m. at the MSHDA Meeting at Eagle Eye Golf & Banquet Center, 1550 Chandler Rd., Bath, MI 48808 and on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, from 1:00-2:00p.m. at the MSHDA Detroit office, Cadillac Place Building, 3028 W. Grand Boulevard, Suite 4-600, Detroit, MI 48202. **A special virtual public hearing** will be held on Monday, May 4, 2026 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. via Microsoft Teams, **Join:** https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/26690235843816?p=cNIlpIqOL0TI7gCv04, Meeting ID: 266 902 358 438 16, Passcode: ir68eY9K OR call in (audio only) 1-248-509-0316, 447314986#, Phone Conference ID: 447 314 986#.

Introduction
The Annual Action Plan consists of funding by applicable formula programs: HOME, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and all related programs including CDBG Disaster Recovery, Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDs (HOPWA), the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), the Recovery Housing Program (RHP) as applicable, and the Housing Trust Fund (HTF).
The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) is responsible for preparing the five year plan, annual action plans, as well as the annual Michigan Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) and soliciting comments from the public regarding the outcomes tied to the draft Plan and reporting outcomes on an annual basis thereafter. A link to the draft annual action plan can be found at https://www.michigan.gov/mshda/neighborhoods/michigan-consolidated-plan.

All interested parties are invited to submit written comments directly related to the draft Michigan Annual Action Plan. Information gathered during the written comment period will be used to prepare the Michigan Annual Action Plan for submission.

Individuals and organizations may submit written comments to Tonya Joy and Pierre-Denise Gilliam, 735 East Michigan Avenue, P.O. Box 30044, Lansing, MI 48909. **Written comments must be received no later than May 11, 2026**. Comments can also be submitted to the MSHDA Consolidated Plan Coordinator via e-mail to mshda-ndd@michigan.gov.

Copies of the Michigan Annual Action Plan may be downloaded free of charge from the MSHDA website link above.

Special Assistance: Feedback is encouraged from mobility-challenged individuals. Persons with disabilities needing accommodations for effective participation should contact the MSHDA Neighborhood Development Division at 517-335-2524 to request mobility, visual, hearing, or other assistance.

Equal Opportunity Lender

Taking a GLP-1? Doctors say not to forget about movement and mental health

By EMILY SINER, CARA ANTHONY and BLAKE FARMER
Nashville Public Radio / KFF Health News (TNS)

Severe ankle pain drove Jelon Smart to start taking a weight loss injection a year and a half ago.

Smart was 285 pounds and worked as a caterer in Savannah, Georgia. After she'd been standing on her feet for long hours, her ankles would be "as swollen as a football," she said. She was walking with a limp. An orthopedic doctor diagnosed her with Achilles tendinitis and recommended losing weight to mitigate the symptoms. Smart began taking the brand-name GLP-1 Ozempic.

The appetite suppression resulted in her shedding pounds quickly, at first.

"I lost 30 pounds initially without changing anything," said Smart, 48. But then she found herself unable to shed additional pounds.

GLP-1s have quickly become one of the most popular types of weight loss drug in America. Nearly 1 in 5 people have taken them at some point, according to research from KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News. But doctors say it takes more than a regular shot for patients to achieve their weight goals in the long run.

Here's what to know.

The old-school rules of weight loss and health still apply

Regular exercise, smart food choices, plenty of sleep – those basic, healthy lifestyle choices are not only going to help you lose weight on a weight loss drug but also help you keep it off, said Dafina Allen, an obesity medicine physician who runs a clinic in Saginaw, Michigan. For example, some people find that they eat less on a GLP-1, "but they're not improving their health because they're not exercising. They're not improving the quality of the food they're eating," Allen said. The path to weight loss is also guided by hormones, metabolism, and genetics.

After her weight loss on Ozempic plateaued, Smart realized she needed to start moving her body, too. "I'm in the gym now six days a week," she said. "I went from 285 to 175" pounds. The swelling and pain in her ankle went away as well.

Mental health matters, too

The mind and body are deeply connected. Food and body image can be especially emotional, Allen said. "I can tell you about the patients that I helped lose 50 pounds, that I helped lose 100 pounds, and they still look in the mirror and are not happy."

The key is seeking help for mental health along the way, said Gerald Onuoha, who practices internal medicine in Nashville, Tennessee. "Making sure that you're talking to people about your problems, whether it's a family member or a licensed professional, I think goes a long way," he said.

Work with a doctor to closely monitor your dosage

Onuoha said people can run into serious problems if they increase their GLP-1 dosage too quickly or don't follow the recommended schedule. He's seen patients come to the hospital with pancreatitis, gallstones, or acute kidney injury. "I always ask patients that are on GLP-1s: How long have they been on them?" he said. "Are they adhering to the directions? Because those things determine whether or not you're going to have those complications."

Part of the issue, Allen said, is that GLP-1s are relatively easy to access – and often much cheaper – through online pharmacies or websites, but those providers may not educate patients about their dosage or side effects. "So they might just go online, find a random company that will ship it to their house, where they don't even know what dose of the medication they're taking, or even if the medicine is safe for them as the patient with the medical conditions they have," she said.

People and policy

GLP-1 drugs can be costly, and most insurance programs – public or private – don't cover the medications for weight loss. Medicaid, the government program that covers 69 million Americans, covers GLP-1s for medically accepted conditions like diabetes, but only about a dozen state Medicaid programs cover GLP-1s for obesity treatment, according to KFF. For older Americans with Medicare, the federal government is planning to allow temporary coverage of GLP-1s for weight loss starting in July.

HealthQ is a collaboration between Nashville Public Radio and KFF Health News. KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs of KFF – the independent source for health policy research, polling and journalism.

Can a single therapy session make a difference?

Experts say yes, with the right mindset

By ALBERT STUMM
Associated Press

Just before the holidays in 2025, Julie Hart felt stuck. A nagging problem she had struggled with for years left her ruminating all day and questioning nearly everything she had ever said, done or could do.

She was considering traditional therapy but decided instead to try single-session counseling. Rather than committing to weekly therapy sessions, she would get only 60 minutes to tackle the problem. It worked.

"It helped me get unstuck, is how I would describe it, in a very positive, meaningful and effective way," said Hart, of Springfield, Virginia.

Hart joined what experts say is an increasing number of people who, at least for now, have decided to forgo the weeks, months or even years that traditional therapy implies in favor of a more targeted approach.

The therapy is what it sounds like: one session, typically an hour, where a counselor helps the client identify concrete steps toward relieving a specific problem. The intention is not to completely solve a problem, but rather to help clients walk away with a toolbox of strategies on how to approach it.

"Those strategies made all kinds of sense," Hart said. "But you can't identify them when you're in it."

Where single-session therapy comes from

It's not new. Sigmund Freud notably offered it.

But it has become increasingly common as a way to fill gaps in access to mental health care, and the need is greater than ever, said Jessica Schleider, a Northwestern University psychology professor and the founding director of the Lab for Scalable Mental Health.

The cost of traditional therapy has risen to several hundred dollars a month, and even those who can afford it or have insurance encounter long waiting lists.

"Even if we doubled miraculously the number of trained mental health professionals overnight, we still wouldn't come anywhere close to meeting the need for mental health support," Schleider said.

That doesn't factor in other barriers, such as people who can't take time off work to attend weekly sessions.

Besides, data show that the most common number of sessions people are likely to receive is just one because many people start and don't come back, Schleider said.

"It's a really elegant solution to get people support they need at the moment that need arises," she said.

How it differs from traditional therapy

Sharon Thomas, a psychologist and director of signal-session therapy at the Ross Center in Washington, D.C., said both counselor and client enter the session with expectations: "That the client will be able to have meaningful change in their life, and that we'll see an improvement in both their self-efficacy and a decline in their symptoms in just one visit."

Rather than do a full assessment of the client's past and current circumstances, the counselor targets a specific problem. By the end of the session, the client walks away with a written plan of steps toward alleviating it.

"Not everyone wants to discuss childhood trauma," Thomas said. "It's very much focused on what the client wants to focus on in that moment."

Who it's for

Most people can benefit from single-session therapy, whether they are struggling with a difficult circumstance like a work problem or something more persistent, such as anxiety, said Arnold Slive, a psychology professor at Our Lady of the Lake University in Texas, who helped pioneer walk-in single-session therapy clinics in Canada in the 1990s.

Slive said counselors still have an obligation to screen for risk of self-harm, and many people with chronic mental health issues could still benefit from traditional therapy or medication.

"It's not meant to replace all those other things that mental health professionals do, but it can help people feel better," Slive said.

Another expectation is that every client already walks in with strengths that will help them address their issue. Single sessions also often attract a different type of client, such as someone who might be skeptical about whether traditional therapy is right for them.

"It's like putting a toe in the water," Slive said.

Experts point to research that it works

Schleider said research on single-session intervention has "blossomed in the past five or 10 years to where this has become a more well-established form of mental health support."

Her lab conducted a meta-analysis of 415 clinical trials and found that in most cases, single-session approaches reduced mental health difficulties across various problems, including depression and anxiety, for both youth and adults, she said.

For Hart, she has continued to feel better months later, and she said she felt more confident because she knew she could come back.

"I left feeling so optimistic," Hart said.

South Haven Tribune CLASSIFIEDS

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0900 LEGALS

PUBLIC NOTICE

THREAT TO TRANSPARENCY

Tell your lawmakers to prioritize transparency and keep Michigan's public notice requirements in newspapers.

Public notices like this one play a critical role in helping Michiganders learn about and weigh in on important tax proposals, zoning changes, new ordinances and proposed property developments that may affect you and your family.

Michigan already ranks among the worst states in the U.S. for government transparency, and some of our state lawmakers are trying to remove public notice requirements. That would make actions and decisions by government officials even less trans-parent to the people they serve.

Michigan lawmakers should focus on improving transparency, not making it worse.

Tell your lawmakers to prioritize transparency and keep these accountability measures. Please visit legislature.mi.gov to contact your elected leaders.

Sell your unwanted items quickly with a classified ad.

Bangor Public Schools NOTICE OF VACANCY

The Bangor Public School District is seeking applications/letter of interest for 1 (one) current vacant position on the Board of Education. An individual will be appointed to fill the vacant positions until the November 2026 election.

Individuals must submit letter of interest/application expressing interest in the Board position to the Secretary of the Superintendent, Melissa Quinn at the Superintendent Office, 801 W. Arlington, Bangor, Michigan 49013 no later than noon on April 17, 2026.

Following a review of the submitted materials, the Board will schedule interviews with candidates at a Special Board Meeting on April 27, 2026. If you have any questions concerning the role of the Board of Education and the responsibilities of a Board member, please contact Mr. Lynn Johnson, Superintendent of Bangor Public Schools.

TIMELINE

March 31, 2026 Notice of vacancy announced.
Noon, April 17, 2026 Deadline for submitting applications.
April 27, 2026 Board meets to conduct interviews of applicants.

To be eligible, a person must be a registered voter and resident in the Bangor Public School District, at least 18 years of age, a citizen of the U.S., a resident of the State of Michigan for at least 30 days.

The Board of Education of Bangor Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, height, weight, marital status, or any other legally protected characteristic, in its programs and activities including employment opportunities.

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RESERVE THIS SPACE TODAY!

Casco Township General Receptionist/Building Dept Assistant

Casco Township is currently seeking someone to serve as a General Receptionist and Building Department Assistant at the Casco Township Hall, 7104 107th Ave, South Haven.

This is a multifunctional position that would require hours Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, with no weekend or Holiday requirements. This person will report to the Casco Township Clerk and take direction from the Building Inspector. Beginning rate of pay: $21-$23/hour.

Job Responsibilities would include, but are not limited to

*Greeting visitors as the first point of contact and answering incoming calls with professionalism and courtesy.

*Directing visitors and phone calls to the appropriate staff within the Township, along with handling basic questions and inquiries regarding Township operations.

*Maintaining, organizing, and scanning files, records, and correspondence within the Township.

*Supporting the Building Inspector with administrative tasks such as data entry, scheduling, organization of records, and other daily functions.

*Assisting the Building Inspector with input into the building database.

*Providing and processing payments for building permits within the Township.

*Assisting the Clerk, Election Coordinator, or Treasurer with seasonal tasks during Elections and tax collection time.

*Ordering supplies and maintaining a supply inventory for the Township.

Required skills, requirements, and education

*Strong organizational skills with attention to detail for managing multiple office tasks at once.

*Ability to handle sensitive information with discretion and maintain confidentiality.

*Exceptional verbal and written communication skills to handle client interactions and professional correspondence.

*Proficiency in using office software such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Outlook, and PowerPoint.
Professional appearance and demeanor.

*High School Diploma or equivalent required. Additional office, administrative training, or reception experience preferred.

To apply, please submit resume to clerk@cascotownship.org or by mail to 7104 107th Ave. South Haven, MI 49090.
Casco Township is an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status.

SH Scott Club unveils elevator lift

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Scott Club recently announced the completion of an elevator-style lift to improve accessibility in its 133-year-old Michigan Historic Site located on Phoenix Street near the downtown.

According to a news release, The Scott Club is hosting an open house to celebrate the elevator completion from 3 to 5 p.m. on April 18.

Attendees can participate in a tour of the facility and see the new accessibility improvement firsthand.

"The membership of the Scott Club provides educational and entertaining programs and a concert series which are free and open to all," the release stated. "These events are typically held in the architecturally significant upper level of the building."

Previously, the upper level was only accessible via a narrow, steep staircase. Attendees unable to navigate the stairs have watched the programs from the lower level on a flat screen monitor. With the new lift in place, all attendees are now able to fully experience programs and concerts.

"The idea of installing an elevator or lift to improve accessibility at the Scott Club has been informally discussed for many years," the release stated.

An elevator was included in the organization's building priorities list in 2018 and became a strategic plan objective in the 2023-2027 Scott Club Strategic Plan.

In 2024, a feasibility study identified and recommended an elevator-style wheelchair lift that is ADA compliant and could be installed in a compact footprint within the interior of the building.

Photos provided

The South Haven Scott Club recently completed and accessibility improvement project at the 133-year-old Michigan Historic Site located on Phoenix Street.

The South Haven Scott Club recently completed an elevator-style lift to improve accessibility in its 133-year-old Michigan Historic Site.

Fundraising for the lift project began in December of 2024. In May of 2025 the Scott Club Board of Directors approved the project.

Lift components were delivered to the Scott Club in December of 2025 and stored onsite. Actual construction of the shaft, installation of the lift and relocation of existing cabinetry took place from January to April in 2026. The lift passed State of Michigan inspection on April 1.

"The lift accommodates a person in a wheelchair with one more person, or a total of three people standing," the release stated. "It accomplishes the goal of making the programs and concerts at the Scott Club building accessible to all."

The exterior trim of the lift on both levels and other finishing touches have been created to match the original trim in the historic building.

"The Lift Project has been made possible through contributions from individual donors, businesses and foundations, for which the Scott Club is very grateful," the release stated.

In recent years, the Scott Club has completed several renovation projects to keep the building well-maintained, as well as improve accessibility with an ADA-approved entry door and an accessible bathroom.

"The Scott Club traces its origins to 1883, when pioneer women organized a group of friends to expand their horizons through the study of literature, other countries and cultures," the release stated. "The name Scott Club was adopted when the group was reading the works of Sir Walter Scott."

Originally a literary club for women, the Scott Club of today welcomes men in its membership.

Surf Internet construction continues in SH

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — South Haven recently announced Surf Internet construction will continue in the southwest portion of town and restoration and service installations will continue citywide.

According to a news release, construction will be contained within the road right-of-way for this project.

"At times, pedestrian traffic may be temporarily impeded due to utility spotting," the release stated. "Road traffic should be minimally impacted.

Restoration is expected to occur in tandem with construction, weather pending.

New construction work will occur between Water Street and southern city limits from Monroe Boulevard to Le Grange Street.

Construction for the planned build is anticipated to be completed this year.

Private communities may reach out to Daniel Anton with Surf Internet at 219-877-4369 or via email at danton@surfinternet.com to get service in areas not yet covered.

For more information on work areas and construction updates from Surf Internet, go to surfinternet.com/construction/michigan/south-haven.

For questions or concerns regarding construction, reach out to Bella Haberski at 269-637-0776 or via email at bhaberski@southhavenmi.gov.

Road commission begins guardrail vegetation program

By TRIBUNE STAFF

LAWRENCE — The Van Buren County Road Commission recently announced it will begin its annual guardrail vegetation control program the week of April 13 or as conditions allow.

According to a news release, this targeted maintenance effort will address overgrown brush and grasses surrounding roadside guardrails throughout Van Buren County, improving visibility and enhancing overall roadway safety.

The program is expected to continue through April.

"Licensed applicators from The Daltons, Inc. will perform the work, applying approved herbicides to vegetation located in front of, beneath, and behind selected guardrail sections," the release stated. "These treatments help ensure guardrails remain visible.

Residents with questions or concerns about the vegetation control program can contact Brad Bolinger of The Daltons, Inc. at 574-267-7511, or via email at angie@thedaltonsinc.com.

South Haven joins coastal resiliency study

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Area Water Sewer Authority will participate in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study,

According to a news release, the study is a multi-year, basin-wide initiative focused on strengthening coastal communities across the Great Lakes region.

Led by the Army Corps of Engineers in partnership with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and other state agencies, the study evaluates vulnerabilities related to fluctuating lake levels, storms, flooding and erosion and identifies strategies to improve long-term resilience for infrastructure and communities.

The water sewer authority was invited by the department of energy to contribute based on its experience managing extreme lake level conditions, including the high water levels of 2020 and low levels of 2013.

"As part of the study, SHAWSA will support a focused risk assessment of its Water Filtration Plant, collaborating with federal and state partners to evaluate potential impacts and identify adaptation strategies," the release stated.

The study includes basin-wide analysis, risk assessments and development of strategic recommendations to guide future investments and resiliency efforts across the Great Lakes.

The water sewer authority's participation builds upon ongoing local resiliency efforts.

The authority is nearing completion of improvements at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, supported by a $1.5 million grant from the State of Michigan's High Water Infrastructure Grant Program.

"South Haven's connection to Lake Michigan is central to the community's economy, recreation and critical infrastructure," Director Dana Burd said in the release. "Participating in this study ensures our local experience is reflected in regional planning and helps us prepare for future lake level variability."

The final study report is anticipated in 2028 and will inform coastal resiliency planning and infrastructure investment decisions at the federal, state, and local levels.

For more information about the study, go to www.lrd.usace.army.mil/glcrs.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through May 26, 2026.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at the South Haven Memorial Library.

Michigan Maritime Museum: free admission on the first Sunday of every month from November through April.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

South Haven Memorial Library: Bridge Card Game from 1 to 4 p.m. every Tuesday and Wednesday. Open to the public. Beginners are welcome.

Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for students grades 6 through 12 every Monday from 3 to 5 p.m.

April

13 – South Haven Garden Club: Meeting with guest speaker Nancy Ellis and Decoupage activity. Bring a pot or vase. Social time beginning at 12:30 p.m. with the general meeting beginning at 1 p.m.

13 – Soccer: Girls junior varsity team against Berrien County Homeschool at 5 p.m.

13 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Lawton High School at 5 p.m.

13 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against St. Joseph High School at 6:15 p.m.

13 – Soccer: Girls varsity team against Lawton High School at 6:30 p.m.

14 – Baseball: Boys junior varsity team at 4 p.m.

14 – Track: Middle school boys and girls teams at the SAC Quad at 4:30 p.m.

14 – Softball: Girls junior varsity team against Watervliet High School at 4:30 p.m.

14 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting with Paul Hix to present and provide a market update.

15 – Golf: Boys junior varsity team compete in the SAC JV Jam at 4 p.m. Hawkshead.

15 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Otsego High School at 4:15

15 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Berrien County Homeschool at 5:15 p.m.

15 – Track: Boys and girls varsity teams compete in the SAC Tri with Bridgman and Gobles schools at 4:30 p.m.

16 – Softball: Girls varsity team against Mattawan High School at 4 p.m.

16 – Soccer: Girls junior varsity team against Berrien Springs High School at 5 p.m.

16 – Soccer: Girls varsity soccer against Berrien Springs High School at 6:30 p.m.

17 – South Haven Memorial Library: Messy Play Fridays for preschoolers from 11 a.m. to noon.

18 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Gull Lake Marine South Haven and Boat Safe Chicago hosting an intro to boating for women class from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This free three-hour course includes a boat ride. Registration with Eventbrite.com is required.

21 – Scott Club: Journey to the End of the World – The Falkland Islands, South Georgia and Antartica. Location to be determined. Begins at 1 p.m.

21 – Scott Club: Rotary Club: Evening meeting at the American Legion beginning at 530p. Presentation will be by Anthony Marsala Sr. of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary.

21 – Baseball: Boys varsity team against Coloma High School at 4 p.m.

21 – Softball: Girls varsity team against Coloma High School at 4 p.m.

21 – Tennis: Girls varsity team against Black River Public School at 4:30 p.m.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

23 – Tennis: Girls varsity team against Allegan Public Schools at 4:30 p.m.

24: South Haven Memorial Library: Parent Cafe from 11 a.m. to noon.

25 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "Invasive Species: What to Know Before You Start Planting" with Jena Johnson from the Van Buren Conservation District from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

25 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m.

27 – Golf: Boys varsity team compete in the SAC Jam at 4 p.m. at Hawkshead.

27 – Track: Boys and girls teams compete in the SAC Tri with Allegan and Coloma schools at 4:30 p.m.

27 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Bloomingdale High School at 5 p.m.

27 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Coloma High School at 6:15 p.m.

28 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Presentation will be by Nicholas Dalton on Rural Development Enterprise as Economic/Business Development.

28 – Track: Boys and girls middle school teams compete in the SAC Quad at 4:30 p.m.

28 – Baseball: Boys varsity team against Watervliet High School at 4:30 p.m.

28 – Softball: Girls varsity team against Watervliet High School at 4:30 p.m.

29 – Soccer: Girls junior varsity team against Hartford Public School at 5 p.m.

29 – Soccer: Girls middle school team against Bridgman Public School at 5 p.m.

29 –Soccer: Girls middle school team against Plainwell Schools at 6:15 p.m.

29 – Soccer: Girls varsity team against Bridgman Public Schools at 6:30 p.m.

30 – South Haven Speaker Series: Ambassador Bridget Brink speaking on "Why Ukraine and Eastern Europe Matter." Refreshments available at 6:30 p.m. Program begins at 7 p.m. at Lake Michigan College, South Haven campus.

30 – Softball: Girls junior varsity team against Harper Creek High School at 4 p.m.

30 – Baseball: Boys junior varsity team against Hopkins High School at 4 p.m.

30 – Tennis: Girls varsity team against Galesburg-Augusta High School at 4:30 p.m.

Whitmer won't endorse in 2 key Dem. races

By CRAIG MAUGER
The Detroit News (TNS)

PLYMOUTH — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said Wednesday that she won't make endorsements in either the Democratic primary election for the U.S. Senate or the Democratic convention contest for secretary of state, a race that features her own lieutenant governor.

After a press conference celebrating the start of the road construction season in the state, Whitmer told reporters she's "not going to make endorsements prior to the convention," which will take place April 19 in Detroit.

Democrats from across Michigan will gather on that date to pick nominees for attorney general and secretary of state. Lt. Gov. Garlin Gilchrist II, who was Whitmer's running mate in 2018 and 2022, and Suzanna Shkreli, a former member of Whitmer's administration, are both seeking the secretary of state job, along with Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum, who served with Whitmer in the Legislature.

Meanwhile, Whitmer said on Wednesday that she will stay out of the heated three-way Democratic primary race for the U.S. Senate. That nomination will be decided by primary voters on Aug. 4.

"I want to make sure that I don't lose sight of the job that I have to do every single day as governor," Whitmer said, when asked why she wasn't making endorsements in those key races.

But Whitmer acknowledged that she has endorsed candidates in some other contests in recent months.

As examples, she's publicly supported state Sen. Jeremy Moss, D-Bloomfield Township, for a seat in the U.S. House and state Sen. Sean McCann, D-Kalamazoo, for another U.S. House seat.

Whitmer didn't explain on Wednesday what made those races different than the marquee contests for Michigan's open U.S. Senate seat and the secretary of state's office.

She's in her eighth and final year as Michigan's governor and remains influential among many state Democrats.

Whitmer's presence has loomed over the competitive secretary of state campaign, in part because of Gilchrist's involvement.

Gilchrist has won the support of some labor groups, like the United Auto Workers and the Michigan Education Association. But Whitmer hasn't weighed in publicly.

In the Democratic Senate primary, former candidate for governor Abdul El-Sayed, state Sen. Mallory McMorrow and U.S. Rep. Haley Stevens are believed to be in a close race for their party's nomination.

The seat is open because Sen. Gary Peters, D-Bloomfield Township, declined to seek another term.

Adrian Hemond, a Democrat and a Michigan political consultant with the firm Grassroots Midwest, said Whitmer's statement about not endorsing in the races was likely the result of her weighing the impact she could have against the potential political costs.

In the secretary of state campaign, for example, there are multiple candidates with close ties to the governor and to interest groups that have long-standing relationships with her, Hemond noted.

"Is the juice worth the squeeze?" Hemond asked.

Whitmer defeated El-Sayed in a three-way Democratic primary for governor in 2018 that also featured businessman Shri Thanedar, who is now a congressman from Detroit.

Whitmer also hasn't endorsed a candidate for governor. She has previously said her role as vice chairwoman of the Democratic Governors Association, which works to elect Democratic candidates for governor positions across the country, prevents her from getting involved in the primary contest between Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Genesee County Sheriff Chris Swanson.

PRIORITIES

From page A1

urgent care in South Haven and possibly waive some of the fees for getting it built.

City Manager Kate Hosier said Bronson was looking into putting a similar facility in the township.

City council expressed the desire to add the health care facilities as a fourth priority, instead of replacing one of the other three already listed in the strategic plan.

Council member Dave Flack expressed concerns about putting more work and stress on the city staff by adding a fourth priority.

Council member Mary Hosley and Capps said the lifeguard program would be less of a priority after the program is set up for the season.

City council agreed to have a fourth priority added to the list.

Boards and commissions

City council appointed George Sleeper to a partial term on the planning commission and Nick Kish to a partial term on the zoning board of appeals.

"I agree with the comments that were made that George has (an) outstanding reputation for being fair, impartial and professional," Council member Jeff Arnold said. "He's also done his homework; he's gone above and beyond taking extra classes to be knowledgeable in the area of planning and so I think he'd make an outstanding candidate for planning commission."

Hosley said she was concerned about having too many people from the same wards serving on the planning commission and zoning board.

"Other applicants also have a lot of experience, including one from 2025 was our previous mayor (Scott) Smith, which would then add another Ward 1 for a more equitable distribution of the representation of our wards and be more consistent with the state law for membership to be represented of the entire territory of the local unit of government," Hosley said.

Hosley said the Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the membership of the planning commission must be representative of important segments of the community.

"It seems a bit vague to include wards as one of the segmentation of how we want to put people on boards to me," Flack said. "I haven't heard that one previously in terms of its importance to have each ward represented, it would be nice, but I'm not sure as I sit here, how important that is when we've got a candidate who is very well qualified."

City council approved the two appointments with Sleeper's term ending in May 31, 2028 and Kish's term ending in May 31, 2027.

Other items

City council approved two special events including:

- South Haven Breast Cancer Walk to be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Oct. 3 starting in Elkenburg Park.
- Memorial Day Parade and ceremony to be held from 9 to 11 a.m. on May 25 starting on Center Street and Michigan Avenue and ending at Lakeview Cemetery.

City council approved the award of third-party administrative services contract to Market One for grant management services for the Community Development Block Grant program.

"We will be looking to award a third-party administrative contract to help oversee the grant management elements of the $400,000 that the city of South Haven has received from the Community Development Block Grant," Assistant City Manager Michael Landis said.

The grant was awarded to the city by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority for critical home rehabilitation.

Landis said of the $400,000 awarded, $72,000 is allocated from management services.

The agreement will have Market One help oversee the grant program for the city and they will provide management services, which could include intake applications, eligibility determinations, assistance with contractor procurement, cost verification and project close out.

City council approved the decertification of small street segments on Quaker Street, Indiana Avenue and Maple Street to be removed from the city's Act 51 map.

"These are three very small areas that we would be decertifying," Hosier said. "We actually don't have roads there anymore."

The Michigan Department of Transportation sends the city the Act 51 map every year, which allocates how much state funding the city receives.

Public Works Director Dana Burd said the department audited all of their maps this year and requested the maps be edited and updated in order to be approved for funding.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

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FOCUS

IconicBestiary / Getty images

Gamified math. Video read-alouds.

Why parents are saying no to screens in class

By KATE SEQUEIRA
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Frustration is simmering among parents who say their young children are spending too much classroom time online, disrupting their learning and development at a critical time and clashing with stricter screen restrictions at home.

Grassroots coalitions across California and nationwide are emerging in school districts, including in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Marcos, as parents grow increasingly alarmed that digital activities are replacing hands-on learning and peer interaction with little oversight. Groups want more transparency on technology use, strict limits on screen time and more rigorous vetting on software products.

Julie Edwards grew worried when her daughter began coming home from kindergarten talking about "JiJi," the penguin who stars in an app on her school-issued iPad. JiJi guides her child through gamified math lessons that have become a favorite part of her day.

"It breaks my heart," said Edwards of Tujunga. "My kid comes home and she doesn't tell me about her teacher, she doesn't tell me about her classmates. She tells me about JiJi the penguin from her gamified learning app."

Edwards has been told that her daughter spends 15 to 30 minutes a day with JiJi. But even in small doses what concerns Edwards is that Jiji is a central character in her child's school day. Edwards is planning to move her kindergartner out of LAUSD to attend a charter school that limits screen time next school year. She'll join her fourth-grade sister, who Edwards moved last year when screens began to affect her learning.

Gamified lessons on individual devices and video-directed read-alouds and sing-alongs have become more common in elementary school since the pandemic, including in transitional kindergarten and kindergarten. Nearly one third of parents say their children under age 8 have used AI for school-related material, according to Common Sense Media, which surveyed more than 1,500 families. For these young students, early childhood experts say children should focus more on hands-on learning for development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends families prioritize non-digital activities like play and social interaction for children 5 and under. Though the organization no longer recommends a specific time limit, an hour is a good goal to strive for, said Dr. Tiffany Munzer, the lead author of the organization's latest policy statement on technology use.

Parents said children as young as four are assigned lessons on tablets and Chromebooks as part of their academic instruction and are not always prevented from accessing apps such as YouTube and Minecraft during class, taking away from teacher-led learning.

In 2026, at least 16 states – including Iowa, Vermont and Virginia – have introduced legislation to reevaluate screen time or vet educational technology. At least four states – Kansas, Utah, Minnesota and Tennessee – are considering prohibiting devices in at least part of elementary school.

The movement to ban or severely restrict screen time learning for elementary-age students comes as nearly 40 states have passed legislation to prohibit or restrict cellphone use in schools, including California, which passed a law that will take effect in July. The push for restrictions runs counter to what is a a reality of digital life for American families – whose young children art home can often engage in hours of daily screen time.

Tech's impact in the classroom

Too much screen time can lead to language, cognitive and social-emotional delays as well as challenges with how children manage daily tasks and control impulses, said Munzer, who is also a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Communications and Media Executive Committee.

Human-centered activities are vital for young learners, Munzer said.

"Kids in the preschool and kindergarten years really benefit from hands-on play and tactile learning experiences," she said. "Young children learn best really through these socially mediated experiences and by involving the senses."

For Kate Brody, whose first-grade son attends a charter school in the San Fernando Valley, the addictive nature of her son's school-assigned iPad led to potty accidents during class. At first she thought the incidents were related to her son's adjustment to his new grade level. But then she discovered they were consistently happening during the classes' iPad time. Too invested, he would ignore his body's signals, she said.

"He's not able to tell he needs to go to the bathroom because he's sitting there with headphones on for an hour playing these games that are sort of addictive," said Brody, who handles communication for Schools Beyond Screens, a parent coalition pushing for changes in LAUSD.

An LAUSD spokesperson said elementary school students average between 31 and 50 minutes of screen time, adding that the district works with schools to ensure they are using technology responsibly and effectively. The use of one-to-one devices is left to the discretion of each school.

When screens are helpful

Arguments in favor of classroom technology have typically pointed to equity issues and test preparation. California's statewide assessments are typically taken online beginning in third grade. Because of that, districts need to ensure all students have some familiarity with devices, said LAUSD school board member Nick Melvoin. But testing is not a strong enough reason for children to spend so much time on devices, he added.

Still, technology can be helpful to learning if it is used and designed intentionally. Content that is age appropriate and used to supplement instruction can be beneficial as long as it avoids rewarding children for play, is not overstimulating and doesn't include autoplay or distractions like ads, Munzer said. Data privacy is also important to consider, she added, and certain devices can be helpful for students with disabilities.

But not all platforms measure up. And technology isn't always closely vetted, said Stanford University professor Rebecca Silverman, who has studied the effectiveness of educational technology.

"I think it's hard because there's so many products on the market," Silverman said.

Looking for other options

Some parents aren't planning to wait around for policy changes.

Classroom technology use has been a stressor for India Brookover of Granada Hills, whose daughter will be entering transitional kindergarten, or TK, next year and whose screen time in preschool has been near zero.

Although she wants her child to attend her local elementary school for TK, she is awaiting information about their screen time use. She is also considering a charter school where screens are not used until second grade.

"I just don't understand what kids are learning when you give a 5-year-old an iPad," Brookover said. "I personally feel like it's just gonna make kids expect education to be entertainment and diminish their attention span."

Kim Packard also saw little benefit to one-to-one devices for her four children. She's been pushing for San Marcos Unified to change its policies and is homeschooling her first grader in the meantime. She will do the same with her youngest when she enters TK in 2027.

"I think we have a wonderful school district," Packard said. "I just think that we have swung too far one direction during COVID."

How parents are pushing for change

Distraction-Free Schools Policy Project, which has led advocacy at the state level, wants to prohibit individual devices in kindergarten through fifth grade and is pushing for a return to handwritten testing.

Individuals from districts across the state have begun attending the California chapter's meetings since it got off the ground in December, according to Jodi Carreon, who co-leads it and runs a parent group tackling the issue in San Marcos Unified.

"We're trying to connect parents across the state. Every day we're getting new members," Carreon said.

Some California school districts are reevaluating their technology policies. San Marcos Unified is blocking YouTube on district-issued devices for students in elementary school.

LAUSD recently introduced a resolution that would require the district to develop a screen time policy and weigh prohibiting the use of one-to-one devices for students up to second grade. If passed, the board could implement the new policy as soon as next school year.

"Walking into classrooms, I've even seen kindergartners on iPads. It strikes me at my core," said Melvoin, who introduced the LAUSD resolution. "Kids should be outside, they should be playing, they should be using manipulatives and tactiles."

FOCUS

The explosive rise of prediction markets

How polling failures, gambling legalization and political gridlock paved the way

By PARKER BACH
PhD Student in Media and Communication, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Though prediction markets have been legal in the U.S. for less than 18 months, they can't stop making news and making money.

On prediction markets such as Kalshi and Polymarket, users can stake real money on just about anything, from the winner of the 2028 U.S. presidential election to when Taylor Swift will get married.

But this isn't simple entertainment: In theory, these wagers serve as a means of collecting the public's insights into the future.

That's why you may have seen CNN's pundits casually mention Kalshi's election odds for the 2026 primaries, or watched CBS offer real-time Polymarket projections of which actors would win awards during the Golden Globes.

Existing research on the principles and history of prediction markets suggests they can be a valuable way of pooling collective knowledge about the future.

But as researchers like me, journalistsand legislators race to understand the impact these markets are having on society and politics, several questions have emerged about the regulation of these platforms and their forecasting abilities.

The what and why of prediction markets

In practice, prediction markets are quite simple.

Each market offers what are known as "event contracts" on whether some future outcome will occur. Each contract costs between 1 and 99 cents, paying out US$1 if the event occurs or nothing if it does not.

Similar to sports betting, purchasing a contract represents a wager. There are higher returns for positions on outcomes deemed less likely. Like in the stock market, a trader can buy and sell contracts over time, as odds – and thus prices – fluctuate.

At the time of writing, Kalshi traders put the odds of the passage of the SAVE Act, legislation centered on requiring proof of U.S. citizenship to register to vote, at about 10 percent. So each contract for this outcome costs 10 cents. If I think the act is more likely to pass than that, I could purchase some "shares" and sell them at a higher price if the odds go up in the future. If I hold them and the bill ultimately becomes law, I would receive a return that's 10 times what I originally paid.

Two theories support the idea that prediction markets should excel at forecasting: the wisdom of crowds and the efficient market hypothesis.

First described over a century ago, the wisdom of crowds refers to the idea that the median judgment of a large, diverse group of people operating independently is often more accurate than that of a single expert.

A related argument appears in the efficient market hypothesis, which emerged in the mid-20th century among economists who championed free markets. It holds that prices encode all available information, reflecting the collective judgments of profit-seeking sellers and deal-seeking buyers.

At their best, then, prediction markets aggregate collective intelligence to weigh the likelihood of future events.

Polling's credibility crisis creates an opening

Gambling on the outcomes of the day's events has a long history. In 16th-century Italy, gamblers could wager on the election of civic magistrates and the outcome of papal conclaves. And from the 1880s to 1930s, New York City was the hub of political wagering, which sometimes exceeded the stock market in daily volume.

Reporting on bets ahead of the 1924 presidential election, The New York Times observed, "It is an old axiom in the financial district that Wall Street betting odds are 'never wrong.'"

However, the rise of scientific polling and legal crackdowns on political wagering forced prediction markets to fade to the background.

That changed in 2024.

One month before the U.S. elections, a federal court granted the prediction market startup Kalshi permission to legally operate prediction markets concerning U.S. election results.

Around the same time, Elon Musk posted on X about Donald Trump leading Kamala Harris in prediction market odds. Trump followed suit. Kalshi put up billboards with live election odds in Times Square. Users and dollars flowed in. By election day, a volume of over $500 million in presidential election bets had been traded on Kalshi alone. Polymarket featured over $3.6 billion more in volume.

Political polling, meanwhile, was facing a crisis of confidence. Response rates had been declining for decades, and Trump voters had been undercounted in 2016 and 2020.

The polls forecast the presidential election as a coin toss. The prediction market, meanwhile, favored Trump at roughly 60 percent odds to win.

After Trump won at the ballot box, prediction markets declared victory over polling as the new, trustworthy forecasters of public opinion.

The utility of the markets

Over the past 50 years, journalists have increasingly incorporated quantitative data in their reporting, and audiences have come to expect political forecasting as part of their news diet.

With polling experiencing a crisis of confidence, prediction markets have become an increasingly attractive way for journalists to offer a data-backed snapshot of public beliefs.

Prediction markets have other advantages over polls for journalists. They respond to events in real time, and they're free to access. Polls, meanwhile, take time and money to administer. They provide forecasts for political outcomes that go beyond elections – such as Cabinet nominations and Supreme Court decisions – which are usually outside the purview of polling.

In recent months, Kalshi and Polymarket have inked severalpartnershipdeals with news outlets. There's a symbiotic relationship at play: Prediction markets provide journalists with data to report and discuss. Journalists, in turn, legitimize prediction markets by citing them as a trusted source.

Prediction markets have historically performed well on elections. Whether they're more accurate than polls on other kinds of questions is still up for debate.

If traders behave purely rationally, in the economic sense, they might flit between positions to maximize profit based on new information, personal biases aside.

But when wagering on elections, most traders have seemed to consistently buy and sell only one position, rather than switching between them. They may think they're trading rationally while exhibiting a "wishful thinking" bias. Or, like many sports bettors, they may be wagering out of fandom or for entertainment.

All of these scenarios could undercut the accuracy of these markets.

The elephant in the room

Many journalists are embracing the data even as their news outlets run stories about concerns over insider trading in predictive markets. Because the outcome of events is often determined by human actors, those privy to certain plans – say, a looming ceasefire deal – would have access to information not available to the public and could profit handsomely off that information.

Two anonymous accounts made hundreds of thousands of dollars predicting the downfall of Nicolás Maduro and betting on the toppling of Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, with traders putting their money down just before the U.S. took military action. This timing has raised some eyebrows.

Kalshi prohibits insider trading, and in early 2026 it fined and suspended two high-profile traders who were using inside information.

Likely in response to bad press and statements from lawmakers seeking to regulate the platforms, Kalshi and Polymarket also announced new insider trading rules on March 23, 2026, centered on politics and sports.

The legal mechanisms for enforcing these rules, however, are less clear. SEC Rule 10b5-1 prohibits trading securities on the basis of material nonpublic information.

But event contracts are not governed by the SEC. They're under the purview of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, a much smaller agency. As things stand, the small agency has too few employees to regulate the legality of specific event contracts, which are governed by the Commodity Exchange Act. Kalshi and certain other prediction market platforms are instead given the latitude to self-certify the legality of each contract.

Any efforts to meaningfully regulate insider trading would, in my view, require clear rules and viable enforcement mechanisms.

From participation to profit

As I conduct my research, I often consider what the booming popularity of prediction markets says about American culture and politics in 2026.

In 1969, sociologist Erving Goffman theorized that Americans' attraction to gambling stemmed from a need for "action" in an increasingly bureaucratized society. Similarly, studies have suggested that betting on sports makes fans feel like they're participating, not just observing.

Congress is less productive than ever. Most Americans feel they have little influence over the workings of the government, with many looking on helplessly as democratic guardrails have been dismantled.

Who knows what will happen in the coming year. The filibuster might be weakened, or the U.S. could invade Cuba. Most Americans will have little say. But prediction markets at least offer the chance to make a buck off the action.

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Hundred dollar bills with the words "What's Next?" // MCCAIG / Getty Images

FOCUS

The scammer, the fixer and the cop

Inside LA's world of millionaire 'crypto kids'

Former LAPD Officer Eric Halem was convicted of robbing a 17-year-old who lived in a high-rise Koreatown apartment. Koreatown can be seen here in Los Angeles, California on March 11.

Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times / TNS

By MATTHEW ORMSETH and LIBOR JANY
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Daniel landed in Los Angeles with his girlfriend and a hard drive containing $350,000 in bitcoin.

The 17-year-old's lifestyle was intended to draw attention: Parties at the hottest clubs. Rented sports cars. Cuban link chains. Imitation Richard Mille watches.

California is full of young people who were transformed into millionaires when crypto went mainstream. But Daniel didn't just buy digital money when it was cheap and watch it skyrocket in value. He stole it.

The teenager – who was identified only by his first name when he testified as a cooperating witness at a recent trial – was part of something called "the comm," which federal authorities say was a loose network of con artists who treated defrauding investors of millions of dollars like a game.

Holed up in lavish rental homes in Encino and Malibu, they hatched schemes to trick people into giving up access to crypto accounts with nine-figure balances. They gleefully screen-recorded some of the heists, prosecutors wrote in court documents charging them with racketeering, fraud and money laundering.

For Daniel, a rail-thin teenager with a wispy goatee and thick black hair, the fun was not necessarily spending the stolen funds on cars, cocaine, jewelry and his 23-year-old girlfriend, but flaunting his lifestyle on social media.

It got him noticed by the wrong people.

Daniel was the star witness of a trial in February and March that revealed a subculture revolving around newly created crypto wealth. There are "crypto kids" – some scammers like Daniel, others who acquired their riches legitimately. There are fixers who set up them up with homes, cars, clothes and other luxuries.

And then there are those who preyed on the crypto kids. When masked, armed men forced their way into Daniel's apartment in 2024, they identified themselves as police officers.

One of them had worked for the Los Angeles Police Department, but he wasn't on the job when he came for Daniel.

According to one witness, the former officer justified taking the teenager's crypto at gunpoint, calling it "stealing something from somebody who stole."

'Ghost' and the illicit crypto economy

On the witness stand, Daniel didn't say where he grew up. He spoke English without the trace of an accent and said he's also fluent in Spanish and Portuguese. A detective testified the teenager showed him a passport that said he was born in Rio de Janeiro, but he acknowledged the document could have been fake.

Daniel said he met members of the comm through the encrypted messaging app Telegram. As he described it, they were not hackers. They stole fortunes through deceit, working in concert to impersonate employees from well-known crypto exchanges.

Daniel testified he called people with accounts on Coinbase and other platforms, pretending to be a customer service representative. After tricking investors into handing over login access, he transferred bitcoin and other currencies into "hardware wallets" beyond the reach of law enforcement, Daniel said.

In one of the most brazen heists attributed to the comm, Malone Lam, a 20-year-old Singaporean national who was then living in Los Angeles, allegedly stole $248 million in 2024.

While staying at a rented Encino mansion, prosecutors say, Lam plotted with several accomplices to trick an investor from Washington, D.C., into thinking he was being hacked. After Lam's accomplices purposely used incorrect credentials to access the man's Google account, the investor got a security alert, Jonathan Stratton, an assistant U.S. attorney, said at Lam's bail hearing.

Lam has pleaded not guilty to charges of racketeering, fraud and money laundering.

According to Stratton, Lam, posing as a Google representative, called the investor and convinced the man to give up his password and security codes to prevent what Lam described as a hacking attempt. Lam allegedly saw the man had an account with Gemini, a crypto brokerage, and an accomplice posing as a Gemini representative then called the investor.

Convinced his Gemini account had been compromised, the man agreed to download what he thought was a security program. In fact, it was a remote desktop application that enabled Lam and his conspirators to transfer 4,000 bitcoins to themselves, Stratton said. If Lam had tried to carry off that amount of money in $100 bills, the prosecutor said, it would have weighed more than 2½ tons.

Afterward, Lam embarked on "what only can be described as an outrageous and exorbitant spending spree," Stratton said. According to the prosecutor, Lam spent $569,525 in one night at an unnamed L.A. nightclub, and he became "notorious" for throwing Hermes bags worth tens of thousands of dollars into crowds of partygoers.

On Telegram, Lam was known as $$$, King Greavys and Anne Hathaway.

Daniel was known as Scare. Testifying in a downtown L.A. courtroom, Daniel, dressed in a charcoal suit, white dress shirt buttoned to the throat and Louis Vuitton belt, said someone else had already claimed the Scare handle on Instagram, so he bought it from them for $16,000. He posted photographs that showed off trappings of luxury without ever revealing his face.

One depicted a Louis Vuitton bag with the caption: "I've never seen a cheater lose so why would I play fair?"

When he arrived in L.A. in November 2024, Daniel had no credit history and couldn't rent an apartment in his own name. He said that through a nightlife promoter, he was introduced to Pierre Louis, a fixer who specialized in getting rich people what they wanted.

Louis, 27, testified he grew up in Montreal. In a thick Quebecois accent, he said he set up rappers, athletes and other wealthy clients with rented cars, homes, jewelry and clothes. Although he catered to rich people and hung out in posh nightclubs on the Westside, Louis said he made only about $50,000 a year and lived in an apartment in Burbank.

When he first met Daniel, Louis testified the teenager tried to scam him by offering to help with his crypto investments. That didn't put off Louis, who rented Daniel a high-rise apartment on Wilshire Boulevard. The teenager sent him $60,000 in bitcoin for six months' rent.

Louis offered another service: a way to launder stolen crypto. Unable to use legitimate exchanges, Daniel testified he converted some by trading it for gold with a downtown L.A. jeweler. He also relied on Louis to connect him with people willing to pay cash for bitcoin without asking questions.

Through mutual friends in the luxury car rental business, Louis said, he had met a man called Ghost who had a network of crypto buyers. Louis testified that he sent Ghost funds he'd received from Daniel and other crypto kids, and Ghost brought him cash. Both Louis and Ghost charged their clients fees of 2 percent to 5 percent, the rate varying depending on who was involved, Louis said.

After meeting Ghost, Louis said, he usually brought the cash to a car rental business in Van Nuys called Drive-LA to use its electric money counter. The company, which owned a fleet of Lamborghinis, Porsches and Bentleys, was run by a former officer who aspired to be more than just a patrol cop.

Lamborghinis and '$5 wrench attacks'

Eric Halem created Drive-LA in 2021 as a side gig to his day job patrolling the San Fernando Valley for the LAPD.

The business, which also offered customers access to jets, homes and chauffeurs, gained a loyal following among local rappers and social media influencers. During an internal affairs interview, Halem said that he raked in about $1 million a year in profit from Drive-LA, according to a department source who requested anonymity in order to discuss personnel matters. He claimed in online interviews that he had interests from venture capitalists and was looking to expand.

A 13-year veteran of the LAPD, Halem quit the force in 2022 but was still working as a reserve officer when he met Louis, who testified he brokered hundreds of car leases for Drive-LA.

Louis said he was at Drive-LA counting cash he'd received from Ghost when Halem asked where the money came from.

"From the crypto kids," Louis replied.

Halem was curious how they were so rich. "I told him they basically scam or steal people's crypto," Louis recalled during his testimony.

Through Halem, Louis said, he was introduced to Gabby Ben. Twice convicted of fraud, Ben, 51, has ties to Israeli organized crime circles, a prosecutor said at his bail hearing in November.

Louis brokered the sale of Amiri clothes and Hermes bags from Lam to Ben, who bought the luxuries on credit and never paid him, Louis testified.

At Ben's rented mansion in the Hollywood Hills, Louis said, he spitballed with Ben and Halem ideas on how to rob crypto kids. Louis recalled Halem saying they were criminals who wouldn't report being robbed to the police.

"It's basically like stealing something from somebody who stole," Halem said, according to Louis.

It's increasingly common for criminals to use physical force to extract crypto from a victim, said Marilyne Ordekian, a lecturer of security and crime science at University College London who co-wrote a paper on the trend.

The heists are called "$5 wrench attacks" after a comic strip in which a robber bypasses a laptop's encryption protections by threatening the user with a wrench. A perpetrator who may lack the technical expertise to hack into a crypto wallet can resort to cruder methods, Ordekian said.

According to authorities, the tools Halem, Ben and Louis planned to use included police uniforms, handcuffs and a gun.

Masked men, handcuffs and a setup

The plot came together two days after Christmas in 2024, Louis testified.

Daniel had sent Louis $23,000 in crypto to convert to cash. Louis said the plan was for him to call Daniel down to the parking garage from his 18th-floor apartment, hand over the money and stall while the others entered the apartment using the door code that Louis had provided.

Louis, Halem, Ben and three others set out from Ben's house around 2 a.m., driving to Koreatown in a green Range River and orange Lamborghini Urus, Louis testified. Both cars were owned by Drive-LA, Louis said.

Louis texted Daniel when he arrived. Ben had given Louis $7,000 in cash for the transaction. When Daniel got in Louis' Range Rover, he testified, he gave the teenager $6,000 – pocketing $1,000. Louis said he "dapped him up" and told him he'd see him soon.

In Daniel's telling, he was counting the money in Louis' car when he got a text from his girlfriend that read, "Help me."

His girlfriend – identified in court only by her first name, Victoria – testified she was in the bedroom alone when she heard the sound of someone entering the incorrect code to the front door. She looked through the pinhole and saw two men wearing hoods.

She testified that she fled to a closet and was hiding there when she heard the sound of the code being entered again – this time correctly. Through the crack under the closet door, she said, she saw feet traipsing through the bedroom and heard men whispering in a foreign language.

The feet approached the closet door. Then it was thrown open.

"I'm greeted by four masked men," Victoria testified. "One of them is holding a gun. I have my hands up. I'm saying, 'I'll give you what you want. I'll give you the safe. Just please don't kill me.'"

The men said they were LAPD officers serving a search warrant.

"Exit the closet," one said.

They cuffed her wrists and demanded to know where her boyfriend was, she testified. Then she heard the sound of Daniel opening the front door.

Daniel said he was "absolutely terrified" to see men wearing black clothes, police vests and black masks that covered everything but their eyes inside his apartment.

"There was nothing running through my mind other than fear," he recalled.

The men slammed him against a wall, snapped handcuffs onto his wrists and pushed him into the spare bedroom he used as an office. The intruders told him to turn on his computer and transfer crypto out of his wallet. Trying to trick them, he showed them a wallet that contained only a little money.

Daniel testified one of the men threatened to shoot him in the foot, asking another intruder for a gun. Daniel told them the combination to a safe where he stored his hardware wallet, which was about the size of a USB drive.

Daniel testified he was being detained in a bathroom with the shower running when one of the intruders burst in and said something in a foreign language. The intruders fled the apartment, leaving Daniel and his girlfriend in cuffs.

A forgotten code and a missing fortune

Louis testified he was responsible for cutting the robbery short. After Daniel left his car, he circled the block a few times, then pulled over, he said.

"I started to feel guilty about what was going on," Louis testified. "He didn't do nothing to me."

Louis had spent a few hours earlier that night drinking at Poppy on La Cienega Boulevard. He said he felt compelled to text his accomplices inside Daniel's apartment that the police were on the way.

"I think it was the alcohol mixed with my feelings," Louis said. He thought about how Daniel, like himself, was "just a person trying to make it big."

Later that night, Louis said, he and his bodyguard returned to Koreatown to check on Daniel – and retrieve the cuffs his accomplices had left behind.

Louis said he found Daniel and his girlfriend hiding in a safe room in the apartment. She was still handcuffed.

"We're going to find who did this," Louis recalled Daniel saying.

Louis testified he felt guilty about setting up Daniel, but he wasn't above pestering Halem and Ben for a cut of the profits. Both tried putting him off by claiming they hadn't stolen anything, Louis testified.

Halem called the whole thing a "major waste of time," Louis said. Yet Ben went on a "nice little shopping spree" with his girlfriend, Louis testified, while Halem bought two Porsche 911 GTs and a Rolex Yacht Master watch.

When Louis confronted Ben at his house, Louis said, an associate he knew by the nickname Lucky brandished a gun and warned "not to mess with them." Louis testified that Ben said he was from the "Israeli mafia" and knew people "everywhere."

Ben has pleaded not guilty to charges of kidnapping, robbery and fraud. At a bail hearing, his lawyer said Ben owned legitimate healthcare and assisted living facilities.

Louis was arrested five months after the robbery. In a jail call, Halem told him to "hang tight" and said he knew an FBI agent who could get him out of jail, according to Louis.

No one from the FBI ever came to see to him, Louis said, and Halem was arrested three months later.

Halem was convicted this month of robbery and kidnapping. He has maintained his innocence but faces a possible life sentence.

Louis was charged with robbing Daniel, and he agreed to testify against Halem in hopes of getting out of prison early. He has yet to be sentenced.

The LAPD never determined what happened to the crypto on Daniel's hard drive.

Daniel testified he might have been able to access his wallet remotely using a "seed phrase," a unique string of words that he wrote down on a piece of paper. But the men who robbed him took it from his safe, he said, and he can't remember the phrase.

Now 18, Daniel testified he doesn't want the crypto back, although he still tracks the price of bitcoin on his phone's home screen.

"I see it every day," he said.

HEALTH

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

Sports injury prevention strategies that boost performance

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: For the past several years, I've been competing in half-marathons. This year, I've decided to challenge myself and enter full marathons. What recommendations do you have for preventing sports injuries as I go to this next level?

ANSWER: Congratulations on continuing to stretch your goals – and for thinking about preventing injury before you begin more intense workouts. For anyone striving to boost their performance, injury prevention shouldn't be separate from your training program; it should be embedded into it. That includes incorporating it into warmups, strength sessions and practice design.

What does that look like? Starting with your warmup, think of it as preparing your system for the activity you're about to do. Your warmup should go beyond static stretching and focus on dynamic movements that activate the muscles that you're going to use in training and competition.

Then add sports-specific patterns to your warmup. For example, if you're a basketball player, jumping is a key movement. So, add that to your warmup. Not only does jumping mimic gameplay, but it also raises your heart rate and preps your system for the activity.

Remember, when you're designing your training program, you're training for capacity, not just the sport itself. That means building general strength, having a good aerobic base, and sound technique and movement quality.

That's what underlies your ability to progress to a higher level. Even elite athletes have become injured because they haven't built that capacity. Sudden spikes in the intensity and volume of exercise can lead to overuse injuries.

One of the key elements of building capacity and preventing injuries is progressive load management. The principle behind progressive load management means not going from zero to 100, but gradually increasing volume or intensity to build capacity.

Before you take any activity to the next level, address any underlying conditions. If you have knee pain while running, work with a physical therapist or an orthopedic or sports medicine clinician so you're not pushing through an injury and potentially making it worse.

Looking at your own experience, you've already built the capacity for running a half-marathon. A full marathon doubles the distance, making it a perfect example of how to apply progressive load management. That increased distance is a significant load not only on your cardiovascular system, but also on the orthopedic structures like bones, tendons and ligaments.

To condition your body and build capacity, design your running program so that over the next several months, you gradually increase mileage each week until you're at full marathon distance.

For someone who is coming back from a sports injury, the same progressive load management applies. A sports medicine specialist will work with the athlete to gradually rebuild strength, measuring progress along the way. Before getting back onto the court or field where they'll be expected to deliver 100 percent, they'll need to simulate the sport.

One group of athletes particularly susceptible to overuse injuries is youth and adolescents. While participation in multiple sports is encouraged, young athletes still need time to build the physical capacity required for each sport as they transition between seasons. Gradually increasing training demands, rather than jumping from zero to 100, is key to reducing the risk of injury.

Pitchers are particularly vulnerable to overuse injuries. Finding the right balance between adequate time off and maintaining arm strength and conditioning can be challenging. Although there are published recommendations for annual time away from throwing, many athletes enter the season having done little or no arm-specific training in the offseason.

To reduce injury risk, conditioning and capacity building should begin well before the season starts. High-quality return-to-throwing programs, which are available both in person and online, can help guide athletes through a structured, progressive plan to safely get back in the game.

While the emphasis in youth sports is often on pitchers, catchers also throw at similar or higher volumes. They may not be throwing at the same velocity, but the volume is there. It's important to take this into consideration when tracking pitch counts. Pitching and catching in the same game should be avoided in most situations.

Remember, when you're designing your training program, you're training for capacity, not just the sport itself. That means building general strength, having a good aerobic base, and sound technique and movement quality. Getty Images

For student athletes, single-sport specialization and year-round competition are not in their best interest when it comes to injury prevention. Athletes need time away from each sport to allow their bodies to recover.

Participating in multiple sports is generally better for any athlete's overall physical health and helps reduce the risk of overuse injuries. It also promotes broader skill development and improved overall athleticism. By varying movement patterns and training demands, the body becomes more adaptable and is given a break from repetitive stress. Athletes often gain transferable skills that improve performance in their primary sport while also enhancing motivation and mental well-being.

– Taylor North, D.O., Sports Medicine, Mayo Clinic Health System, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Sports nutrition for busy families and busy lifestyles

By SARAH KINSELLA, MD, CAQ, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Eating small frequent meals and snacks can help to spread calories throughout the day and avoid large meals in close proximity to exercise.
Getty Images

Hectic schedules, especially as spring sports season begins, can throw a wrench into family meal planning and can encourage families to rely on quick, less nutritious options.

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers guidance to help busy families eat and drink better before, during and after game time.

Preparing nutritious food ahead of time can save both time and money for busy families. Meal preps that can be frozen and reheated later or slow cooker meals can provide healthy meals without adding a huge task to the list.

Eating small frequent meals and snacks can help spread calories throughout the day and avoid large meals in close proximity to exercise. If your entire evening is spent on a ball field or on the go, loading food up and taking it with you is another practical option. No matter how long you will be out for, try to have a piece of fruit or a healthy protein or nut bar with you.

Eating every 3 hours will help to keep your child's blood sugar steady and also decrease overeating at meal times. For some children and adolescents, their lunch period is scheduled early in the day. Families should consider making a nutritious snack available an hour or so before sports practices so children with that earlier lunch time have energy available to fuel activities. This could extend to single-serve snacks in the car while out running errands. Single-serve snacks such as sliced fruit or nuts can be packed ahead of time while handheld fruits like apples can be brought on the go. If you are looking for handheld options, consider granola bars, but be aware of the possibility of increased hidden sugar content.

Creating a hydration and fueling strategy can be helpful on less hectic days too. Young children participating in light activities lasting 1 hour or less may not need to snack before and after exercise. Rather, help these children focus on good nutrition every day.

Older, more active kids may benefit from a more fleshed out fueling and hydration plan that provides what they'll most need before, during and after physical activity.

Around 3-4 hours before exercise, a young athlete should eat a meal of mostly carbohydrates with a moderate amount of protein such as rice with chicken and vegetables. This small meal should be low in fiber and fat, as these can cause an upset stomach. A 70-pound child should drink around 8-10 ounces of water around 2-3 hours prior to exercise while a teenager or adult should have 12-20 ounces of water. Drinking an additional 6-8 ounces directly before exercise can also be helpful.

During exercise, hydration is key. Encourage them to have a small amount of fluid, about 3-4 ounces, every 15 minutes. For activities less than an hour, water is sufficient. For activities lasting longer than 1-2 hours, or in very hot environments, sports drinks can help replenish carbohydrates and electrolytes, but be mindful of sugar content.

Within 30-60 minutes after exercise, it's important to replenish any fluids lost and to refuel with an appropriate source of energy. Focusing on a snack that is rich in carbohydrates and proteins will help rebuild and restore muscles. Chocolate milk is an excellent example of a recovery drink, and crackers with cheese can provide both carbs and protein for recovery.

When it comes to energy, athletes need more during times when they are more active than normal such as tryouts, tournaments, and multiple or overlapping sports. It's important to encourage and plan specifically for extra food and fueling during these periods. Snacks that combine a carb like a cracker and some protein like peanut butter are the most energy efficient.

With busy schedules, sitting down to eat a meal as a family can be tricky and cause feelings of guilt. Dump that guilt and remember that family meals may not happen every day. That's OK! Make the most of your family meals when they can happen and adjust to times when everyone is more likely to be home. Your family meal doesn't have to be dinner when after school activities or late nights at work get in the way. Why not make your family meal breakfast? It is more likely that everyone will be home at the same time early in the morning, which means it is easier to get everyone around the table for some healthy food and family bonding.

Sometimes, the best option for a busy family is stopping at a restaurant for a bite to eat. It's important for everyone in the family to make choices that will help you feel your best when you sit down at the restaurant or step up to the fast-food counter. Look for whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and words like steamed, baked, poached, roasted, broiled or grilled. Do your best to avoid foods with the words fried, au gratin, crispy, escalloped, pan-fried, sautéed or stuffed as this can indicate a high level of fat and calories.

There is no magical food or supplement that can transform an average athlete into a superstar. No matter how old your child is, the most effective way to improve sports performance is to pay close attention to the basics: fluids, calories, training, conditioning and rest.

A well-balanced diet provides a mix of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats with essential micronutrients – calcium, vitamin D, B vitamins, iron, zinc, magnesium, and antioxidants like vitamin C. These are all important for bone health and immune function. Eating either too many or not enough calories can contribute to fatigue, injuries, illness, poor performance and prolonged recovery from sports injuries.

Sarah Kinsella MD, CAQ, FAAP is a sports medicine physician at Fairview Sports and Orthopedic Care in Blaine, Minnesota. Within the American Academy of Pediatrics, she is a member of the Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness.

Benefits of mindfulness meditation go far beyond relaxation

What it is, how to practice it

By YUVAL HADASH and J. DAVID CRESWELL
Carnegie Mellon University

Imagine being asked to sit alone in a quiet room for 15 minutes with nothing to do – no phone, no music, no external distraction. In a well-known 2014 study, many participants found that task so challenging that they chose to press a button to give themselves an unpleasant electric shock instead of continuing to sit with their thoughts and sensations.

Because being with their own thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations can be so difficult, people often turn away from them. Smartphones offer constant distraction from boredom or stress, allowing users to disengage from their present-moment sensations and thoughts with a quick swipe or tap.

But avoiding unpleasant internal experience can backfire. Studies show that doing so is associated with a range of mental health problems, including anxiety and depression.

We are psychological scientists who study mindfulness and how it affects stress, health and well-being.

Mindfulness is a mental state that people can learn to cultivate through training. When people are mindful, they direct their attention toward their moment-to-moment bodily sensations, emotions and thoughts, and they meet those experiences with an attitude of curiosity and open acceptance.

Mindfulness can be cultivated through "mindful moments" in daily life, moments in which people intentionally stay present with what they do, hear, see or feel. However, formal mindfulness meditation involves sustained practice that systematically trains attention and acceptance. Our research shows that training acceptance during mindfulness meditation can substantially improve your emotional well-being.

Tuning into experience can be hard – and helpful

Popular culture often portrays mindfulness as a way of relaxing. But we've found that mindfulness practice can often feel surprisingly difficult. In one of our studies, participants who directed their attention to their thoughts and feelings during a 20-minute mindfulness meditation noticed six times more unpleasant experiences than pleasant ones.

This doesn't mean they were doing it wrong. Turning your attention inward can feel challenging. Often, it brings you into contact with experiences that you normally try to push away, such as feeling bored, uncomfortable or agitated. However, we've also found that facing difficult experiences during mindfulness training can have positive effects.

In particular, adopting an accepting attitude toward your experiences seems to drive many of the positive effects of mindfulness. Our research shows that developing the capacity for acceptance through mindfulness meditation can reduce feelings of loneliness and increase positive emotions, such as happiness. It also reduces stress hormones and helps people notice more positive experiences during stressful situations.

In these studies, we have found that acceptance is the critical driver. When acceptance is removed from mindfulness training, these benefits largely disappear.

The power of learning to accept experience

A key part of mindfulness practice involves turning toward difficult experiences, such as like stress, boredom and pain, rather than seeking distractions or pushing those experiences away. It means noticing feelings and thoughts as they arise, sensing how they show up in the body, and approaching them with an attitude of acceptance rather than judgment or resistance.

A helpful way to think about this comes from the "two arrows" metaphor, which is rooted in East Asian Buddhist traditions. It teaches that there are two types of suffering, which can be likened to being struck by two arrows.

The first arrow is the unavoidable unpleasant experience that comes with being human – for example, feeling exhausted after a poor night's sleep. The second arrow is how we react to that unpleasantness: tensing up, resisting it, replaying it in our mind, criticizing ourselves or trying to escape it. Often this second arrow adds more suffering than the original unpleasant experience.

In mindfulness practice, the goal is not to stop having unpleasant sensations and feelings. Instead, mindfulness helps people accept the unavoidable difficulties of that first arrow and to soften the second arrow by letting go of struggle with those experiences and reactions that make them worse.

THE CONVERSATION

For example, let yourself feel bored without immediately reaching for distraction. Acknowledge anxiety, sadness or grief with openness, instead of trying to suppress those feelings or fueling them with harsh self-criticism.

Practicing mindfulness in everyday life

One way to cultivate this attitude is to treat thoughts, emotions and sensations as guests in your inner landscape. Instead of fighting them or clinging to them, notice when they arise. Acknowledge and welcome them, and when they naturally change, let them go. Some people find it helpful to imagine holding a difficult feeling as they would a crying baby, with a touch that's steady, supportive and kind.

If you want to try this in daily life, the next time you feel a challenging experience, pause and open to the experience for a moment. Notice what you are feeling. Where does it show up in your body – a tightness in the chest or heaviness in the stomach? Can you allow it to be there, even briefly, without trying to fix it or distract yourself from it?

Then observe what happens. Does the challenging experience change over time in any way? Do your reactions shift or soften with repeated practice? Remember that a brief practice is unlikely to produce instant relief, and expecting quick results can actually make it harder to stay open to your experience as it is.

Rather, our findings suggest that meaningful change comes through consistent, ongoing practice. Every small step matters. Over time, brief moments of responding to stress or discomfort with mindfulness can reshape how you relate to challenges and provide greater resilience and ease.

In the study where people chose electric shocks over sitting alone with their thoughts, being with their inner experience felt almost intolerable. Mindfulness offers a different path: not escaping that experience but learning to stay with it. In doing so, what once felt unbearable can become something you can meet with greater emotional balance and well-being.

Yuval Hadash is a postdoctoral fellow in psychology at Carnegie Mellon University. J. David Creswell is a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Carnegie Mellon University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

MAYO CLINIC Q&A

What are the different types of pacemakers?

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

DEAR MAYO CLINIC: I have a slow heart rate, and my cardiologist has recommended that I have a pacemaker implanted. Can you tell me what a pacemaker does and what I should consider when I make this decision?

ANSWER: A heart rate slower than 50 beats per minute is called bradycardia. When the heart beats too slowly, it may not pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. People may experience fatigue, tiredness, shortness of breath, weakness and difficulty exercising.

Some causes of bradycardia are reversible. These include:

- Athletic training, which strengthens and conditions the heart.
- Medications, such as beta blockers or calcium channel blockers.
- Lyme disease, which can cause Lyme carditis and affect the heart.
- Electrolyte imbalances.

Once your heart team has identified and addressed any reversible causes, the most common irreversible cause is a problem with the heart's electrical system – specifically, its ability to properly conduct electrical signals between the chambers. When this happens, a pacemaker – a small, battery-operated device – can regulate the heart rate by delivering carefully timed electrical impulses to the heart.

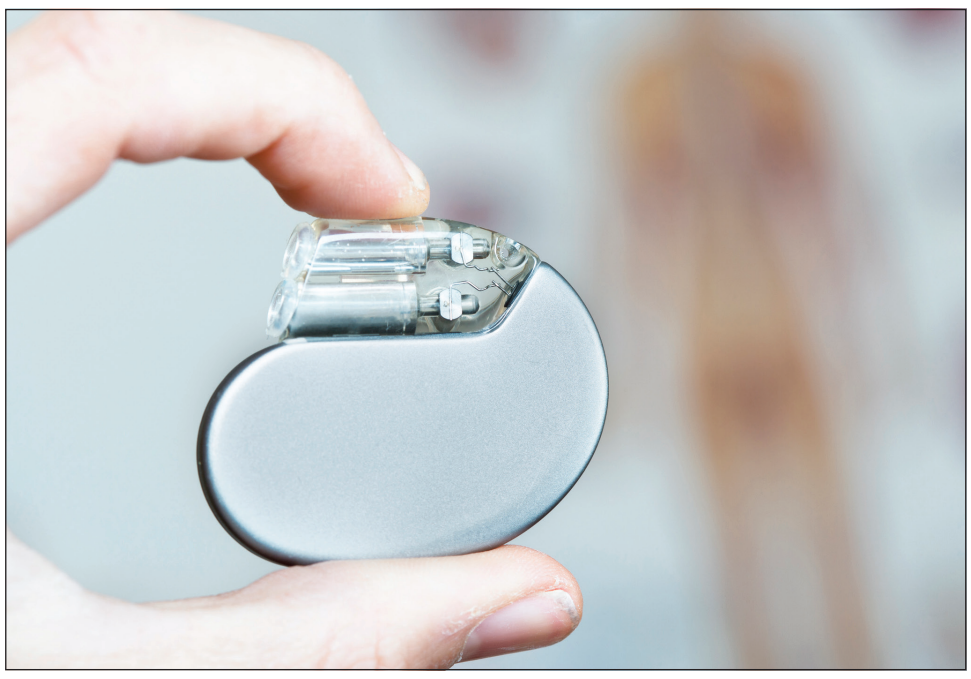
Types of pacemakers

There are two types of permanent pacemakers: transvenous and leadless. Your heart team will determine which type is best for you based on your medical condition and lifestyle.

- **Transvenous pacemaker:** To implant a transvenous pacemaker, a cardiac electrophysiologist creates a small pocket just below the collarbone between the skin and chest muscle. Depending on your needs, up to three wires, called leads, are guided through a blood vessel into the heart. The leads are connected to the pacemaker, which is then placed into the pocket. Patients may go home the same day or the following day.

The first four to six weeks after pacemaker implantation are especially important. You'll need to avoid lifting anything heavier than five pounds and raising your left arm above your head to prevent the leads from getting dislodged. After this period, you can return to your usual activities without restrictions.

It's a myth that pacemakers are affected by cellphones, microwave ovens, X-rays or airport scanners. Most modern pacemakers are MRI compatible, but your heart team may need to reprogram the device before the scan.



Getty Images

When the heart beats too slowly, it may not pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. A pacemaker – a small, battery-operated device – can regulate the heart rate by delivering carefully timed electrical impulses to the heart.

However, strong magnetic fields, such as those found in certain industrial settings or during arc welding, can interfere with pacemakers. Talk with your healthcare professional if you're concerned about this type of exposure.

- **Leadless pacemaker:** This newer pacing technology allows the pacemaker to be implanted directly inside the heart. There is no surgical pocket or leads. The device is about the size of a large vitamin capsule or one-third the size of a standard AAA battery.

A leadless pacemaker may be a good option for people on dialysis, who are at higher risk of infection, or those who rely heavily on their upper body for mobility, such as those who use a walker or wheelchair.

To implant a leadless pacemaker, a small incision is made in the groin. The device is attached to the end of a delivery system, which is threaded through a vein in the leg and into the heart.

Because there is no chest incision or leads to dislodge, recovery is often simpler. The main restriction is avoiding heavy lifting until the groin incision heals, typically within one to two weeks.

Like transvenous pacemakers, leadless devices are safe around common household electronics, but they can be affected by strong magnetic fields.

All pacemakers must be checked periodically to ensure they're functioning properly. After implantation, you'll be sent home with a monitor. Every three months, you will either transmit data remotely or visit your clinic for follow-up.

The battery life of a pacemaker is typically 8 to 12 years, depending on the device and how often it's used. If you have a transvenous pacemaker, you'll receive a notice, usually about six months in advance, that it's time to replace the generator. Your electrophysiologist will remove the device from its pocket and replace it with a new one. A leadless pacemaker can be removed or left in the heart with a new one implanted alongside it.

As patients with pacemakers approach the end of life, they may choose to have the device turned off or the settings adjusted so it doesn't prolong life. This is an important discussion to have with your family and heart care team, and it should be included in your advance healthcare directive.

If you've been diagnosed with bradycardia, talk with your heart team about your options. If a pacemaker is recommended, ask which one best fits your health and lifestyle goals.

– Divya Korpu, M.B.B.S., Cardiology, Mayo Clinic Health System, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Don't want that smokey eye – what cigarette smoke does to your vision

By KARL HILLE
The Baltimore Sun (TNS)

Smoking or living with cigarette smoke can accelerate age-related degeneration of the eyes, researchers from Johns Hopkins Medicine found, and it hurts young eyes more.

"Smoking is often assumed to accelerate aging by releasing tissue-damaging molecules called free radicals," Dr. James T. Handa, principal investigator and chief of the retina division of the Wilmer Eye Institute, said in a press release. "We saw the expression of aging genes linked to mitochondrial function, [protein stability], [cellular self-cleanup], inflammation and metabolism."

Dreamstime / TNS

Aside from lung cancer, it has long been known that smoking can cause disease, death and disability. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that more than 16 million Americans live with a smoking-related disease. Smokers are four times more likely to suffer loss of vision and blindness, according to the Food and Drug Administration.

The exact cause has not been known, until now.

The Hopkins research revealed how smoking harms the eye by observing genetic expression – non-permanent shifts in the way cells use segments of DNA. These changes in expression harm cells in the eye directly, as well as impair their ability to respond to environmental stresses.

Then they compared their mouse observations to retinal tissue from organ donors who smoked and those who did not. They found that cigarette smoke increased or decreased the expression of the same 1,698 genes in the eyes of both humans and mice.

The National Institutes of Health funded the research, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in January.

A separate Hopkins study funded by the FDA and National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute adds to evidence that "cutting back" on smoking does little to reduce the damage. Quitting entirely is the most effective way to improve future health, they found.

"This study shows that even low levels of smoking – for example, only a few cigarettes a day – carry substantial cardiovascular risks," Dr. Michael Blaha, director of clinical research for the Johns Hopkins Ciccarone Center for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease and the study's corresponding author, said on the Hopkins website. "Quitting completely – not just cutting back – provides the greatest health benefit."

They reviewed data from 22 studies following more than 300,000 adults for almost 20 years. They found 125,000 deaths and 54,000 heart attacks or other events.

They also developed a risk index based on the number of cigarettes per day, how long someone smoked, and how long it has been since they quit smoking.

FINANCE

Warning!

If someone says the government wants you to buy gold, it's a scam

By ROXANA POPESCU
The San Diego Union-Tribune (TNS)

Nelvin C. Cepeda / The San Diego Union-Tribune / TNS

San Diego District Attorney Summer Stephan at her office at the Hall of Justice on Monday, March 16, 2026, in San Diego, during an interview about a type of fraud targeting San Diego elderly residents, which can involve precious metals.

SAN DIEGO — Do not trust anybody who says your money is not safe in the bank and it needs to be converted to cash or gold bars and moved to another location.

These instructions might seem simple to heed, but San Diego County crime victims are falling prey to a trending crime where people hand their life savings to criminals in the form of wire transfers, cash and gold bars and never see that money again.

How does this happen?

Thieves run elaborate, multi-step ruses that fool even smart, cautious people.

"The latest scam that targets our seniors, especially, is a is a combination of a tech support scam with government impersonation," San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan said in an interview at her downtown office. Victims believe these fake government messages and they go to local precious metals businesses to buy gold bars, which they then give to strangers, thinking that will protect their savings from fraud. But that is the fraud.

"The U.S. government will never ask you to purchase gold or other precious metals for the purpose of safekeeping. That does not happen. And that should be a big red flag," said Michael Rod, a supervisory senior resident agent with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's San Diego Field Office.

The gold bar twist is a new face on an old ruse: scare people into thinking their money isn't safe and has to be removed from the bank.

Life savings, gone

A 94-year-old San Diego man and his 87-year-old wife gave gold bars in seven batches worth more than $3 million to scammers who they thought were government officials keeping the couple's money safe from scammers. Two men, suspected of being part of a Chinese money laundering network, were arrested last month and face federal charges. A third died in a fatal crash while trying to escape.

In 2024, a sting operation caught two men who pleaded guilty to participating in a scheme that stole almost $1.5 million from an elderly Carlsbad resident. Scammers "convinced her she could safeguard her funds by obtaining gold bars and sending them to the U.S. Treasury," the U.S. Department of Justice said. Over several weeks the victim sent around $1,335,000 in three wire transfers to a precious metal business in San Marcos.

"The victim was instructed to pick up the purchased precious metals – consisting of mostly gold – and to package them. The victim was then directed to hand the package over to an individual under the false pretense that it was being 'secured' for safekeeping," the news release said.

San Diego County's Elder Justice Task Force, a multi-agency partnership, identified more than 4,600 victims and more than $325 million lost to financial crimes against elders since its founding in 2020. Over just the past 12 months, criminals have stolen $140 million from local seniors.

Losses used to average $10,000. "Now we're seeing, regularly, amounts of $100,000, which really is the difference between that senior staying in their home, having food, and not. So it's a major public safety issue," Stephan said.

Gold bars, highly valuable and compact, make it easier to take more in one swoop.

Seniors are targets, Stephan added, because they have money saved for retirement. "We've had people scammed that have multiple degrees and (are) very successful financially," Stephan said.

She offered a theory why tech scams are en vogue: during the COVID pandemic, "we saw more and more seniors learn how to use technology, and have laptops, and engage in technology. And that became an opportunity for scammers."

Gold: a new twist

Gold bar theft, combined with a tech and government impersonation scam, has become more common in the past two or so years, officials said.

"We see that the fraudsters are continuously changing their methodology in order to get the maximum amount of loss from victims, and to lure more victims into trusting them," Stephan said.

The opening gambit is typically a pop-up window with a hack alert, followed by outreach from someone impersonating a government figure, who makes the victim think his or her money is not safe. This is the root of several kinds of scams.

What is new: victims are told to buy gold bars and take them home, where they'll be picked up for safekeeping. The gold amount and size vary, Rod said. Victims are commonly instructed to photograph the gold once they have it, and/or photograph the receipt or proof of its purchase at their home to show that the gold is on site – and that law enforcement is not present.

Meetups with couriers typically happen outside or near the victim's home, and sometimes at a public place, like a grocery store parking lot, Rod said.

The last step: the victim hands the gold to a courier. The gold is then given to a money-laundering criminal organization.

Why gold?

Criminals like precious metals because they are compact and hard to trace. "With the gold bars, they're picked up, and they're gone," Stephan said.

Large wire transfers are more likely to be scrutinized, and the public has begun to understand their role in scams.

"The gold is a manner by which they can extract a large dollar amount from the victim without raising too many suspicions, because people buy gold in larger quantities," Rod said.

Rod added that these crimes often unfold in episodes, over several months. They ask for a smaller amount first, then more and more. First might be a cash or wire transfer. Gold bar theft comes later.

"The bad guys are taking more than one bite at the victim. It's not just a single transaction," Rod said.

In the past two years, the task force has filed cases against more than 40 couriers who handled cash or gold. These can be challenging to investigate and prosecute.

In one recent case, a call center was operated from Dubai and India. It "generated pop-up advertisements on individuals' computers that directed them to call for technical support," the Department of Justice said.

The elderly victims paid for fake tech support services. Scammers also lied and said people needed to pay back thousands of dollars that had been wrongly refunded into their bank accounts. More than 500 victims in the U.S. lost more than $42 million.

Red flags

Stephan sounded the alarm about elder fraud in a recent op-ed. "Scammers are improving their ploys to be even more convincing," she wrote. Her message: "Stop. Hang Up. Tell Someone."

In the subsequent interview, she shared this warning: "My key message is that you should not respond to anything that is unsolicited."

Another is secrecy, Rod said. "They're going to direct you not to tell all the people that you would normally tell when there's a problem in your life. Don't tell your husband, don't tell your wife … don't tell your kids," he said.

Some scammers have even sent fake nondisclosure agreements to victims, leading them to believe "they're contractually prohibited from telling people."

When someone says "not to tell somebody that you live with or are close with that a problem has popped up, that is also a big, big red flag," he said.

A merchant's perspective

Stephan credited local precious metals merchants with educating consumers and working to block such crimes.

Jonathan Cavuoto, the owner of First National Bullion, with stores in San Diego County and Arizona, has seen several victims walk into his businesses to buy gold. The recent high price of gold has made buying this metal popular, but mixed in with legitimate buyers are people being scammed, he said.

"A lot of people want to buy gold and silver, but there's certain red flags with a first-time buyer," he said. One is a large transaction size. The other is speed. "If they needed to buy in a rush, that was one of the key giveaways. Most people are not in a big rush."

He has been in touch with law enforcement. He estimates that four or five couriers have been arrested after picking up gold purchased by victims at his stores.

Metals merchants have to strike a delicate balance, on one side being discreet, on the other working to prevent fraud.

"I'm not looking to share customer information with law enforcement," Cavuoto said. "People want a certain amount of privacy when they're buying gold." But if a customer's language or behavior raises red flags, dealers will involve authorities so customers are not harmed. Dealers "don't want to see people get ripped off," he said.

He said that even when he did due diligence and cautioned customers he suspected were being scammed – showing several a letter from the FBI about gold bar theft – some still proceeded.

"They assured me that they were not going to give this gold to anyone else," he said of one couple. "They assured me that … they were not under duress and that they were buying this as an investment they wanted out of the bank. A couple of months later, they bought again," he said. A relative noticed the pattern and contacted the police.

Several months ago, Cavuoto learned that a different customer sitting in his shop "had already given these people $20,000 in cash and she was supposed to hand them the gold."

She had gotten an email from what looked like antivirus software. She called a phone number in the email.

"It wasn't really Norton, nor McAfee. But they answered the phone as if they were," Cavuoto said. "They explained that her computer was, in fact, infected and it's a good thing that she called." They reassured her that someone from the fraud department of her bank would reach out and explain the next steps, so the scammers do not "completely wipe out her bank account."

Those next steps: "She needs to go get as much cash as she could get out of the bank, and they'll send a courier for safekeeping. And then she needs to go buy gold," Cavuoto said. "She believed that they were going to be able to take the money out of her bank account, so she needed to get it out … before the scammers could."

Advice: Stop. Hang up. Tell someone.

What to look out for with tech and government impersonation scams that involve gold bars and cash:

1. A computer pop-up or text message says your device has been hacked. Or a phone caller says your bank account has fraudulent activity. This is a lie.

The message appears time-sensitive. The vibe is, "Something is happening and you need to act fast," Stephan said.

2. To "fix" the problem, scammers often install remote access software. This is a legitimate tool used in a malicious way: to spy on you, learn how much money you have in your accounts or even "actually transfer (funds) from one account to another," Rod said.

3. A scammer claims to be a government official and alerts you about a "problem" with your bank. "They create a whole story around it," Stephan said. The bank system is insecure or the government is investigating high-level fraud, the scammers say.

4. They convince you it's necessary to transfer your money into gold bars. Scammers coach victims and give them scripts, because buying gold might be unfamiliar to them.

5. A courier leaves with the bars or cash. In only one case that Rod knows of, the victim went with a courier. The rest did not.

6. Versions of this scam can involve pornography and blackmail, Stephan added. Whether it's a text message, phone call or voicemail, if someone reaches out to you first, "that's going to be a scam," Stephan said.

7. If you are being targeted or have been scammed: Stop. Hang up or close the message. Tell someone.

Alert both local law enforcement and the federal government's Internet Crime Complaint Center at ic3.gov. https://www.ic3.gov/. The FBI also has a PSA on its website.

Dreamstime / TNS

You don't have to move money between different institutions to get competitive returns on your cash.

5 ways to use your brokerage like a savings account

By JAMES ROYAL, PH.D.
Bankrate.com (TNS)

The line between brokerage accounts and savings accounts is blurring as financial companies compete for your deposits. You don't have to move money between different institutions to get competitive returns on your cash. Your brokerage account can act as both an investment platform and a high-yield savings alternative.

As brokerage accounts and bank accounts begin to look more alike, savers can often do many of the same things in each account. In a brokerage account, not only can you invest in stocks, bonds and funds, but you can also use it as an omnibus financial account. In other words, you can write checks and pay bills with your account, often while collecting interest, too.

What a brokerage account is and how it works for savings

A brokerage account is an account used to buy and sell publicly traded investments, such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs). But modern brokerage accounts have expanded far beyond just trading securities.

Today's brokerage accounts often function as comprehensive financial hubs where you can hold cash, write checks, pay bills and earn competitive returns on uninvested money. This makes them solid alternatives to traditional bank accounts, especially for people who want to keep their investment and cash management in one place.

Most brokerages automatically sweep excess cash into money market funds or interest-bearing accounts, so your money earns returns even when you're not actively investing it.

1. Earn interest on cash deposits through money market sweeps

The simplest way to use your brokerage like a savings account is to let it automatically manage your cash through money market sweeps. Most brokerages move any uninvested cash into interest-bearing accounts or money market funds.

Charles Schwab, for example, offers FDIC-insured cash accounts that currently pay competitive rates on deposits. Interactive Brokers provides slightly lower yields through SIPC-insured accounts, though it doesn't pay interest on the first $10,000.

These sweep options require zero effort on your part – the brokerage handles everything automatically. The rates often compare favorably to traditional savings accounts, especially at major banks that pay minimal interest. However, online high-yield savings accounts may sometimes offer better rates, so it's worth comparing options based on current market conditions.

2. Invest in short-term government bond ETFs

For potentially higher yields than basic cash accounts, consider investing in ETFs that hold short-term government bonds. These ETFs offer returns that track short-term interest rates while maintaining high safety and liquidity.

Short-term bond ETFs typically hold Treasury securities with maturities under one year, minimizing interest rate risk while providing exposure to current market rates. The bonds are backed by the federal government, making them among the safest investments available.

The Goldman Sachs Access Treasury 0-1 Year ETF (GBIL) is one example that tracks short-term Treasury rates. About three-quarters of the fund's holdings mature within three to six months, and the expense ratio is just 0.12 percent annually – roughly $12 per $10,000 invested.

These ETFs can be sold any business day, with settlement typically taking two to three business days. This provides more liquidity than traditional CDs while offering potentially higher yields than money market accounts. The main consideration is that unlike FDIC-insured deposits, ETF values can fluctuate based on market conditions, though short-term government bond ETFs are generally very stable.

3. Use money market mutual funds for stable returns

Money market mutual funds offer another way to earn competitive yields while maintaining high safety and liquidity. These funds invest in very short-term government securities, typically with average maturities of 30 to 60 days.

The Vanguard Federal Money Market Fund (VMFXX) exemplifies this approach, recently offering yields above 3.6 percent with an average holding maturity of 38 days. The fund requires a $3,000 minimum initial investment but allows smaller additions afterward.

Money market funds track short-term interest rates closely, so yields rise and fall with Federal Reserve policy changes. The very short maturities mean the funds adjust quickly to rate changes while maintaining stable share values.

These funds charge low expense ratios – Vanguard charges between 0.07 percent and 0.12 percent, for example – letting you keep most of the interest earned. They can be redeemed any business day, providing excellent liquidity for emergency needs or investment opportunities.

Like bond ETFs, money market funds aren't FDIC-insured, but government money market funds are considered extremely safe due to their Treasury holdings.

4. Consider brokered CDs for guaranteed yields

Brokered certificates of deposit combine the guaranteed returns of traditional CDs with the convenience of brokerage account management. These work similarly to bank CDs but can be bought and sold through your brokerage account.

Brokered CDs typically require $1,000 minimum investments and are available in $1,000 increments. They offer contractually guaranteed interest rates and are often FDIC-insured, though you should verify coverage before purchasing.

The key difference from bank CDs is liquidity. If you need access to your money before maturity, you can sell the brokered CD in the secondary market. However, if interest rates have risen since you bought the CD, you might receive less than you paid. Conversely, if rates have fallen, you might get more than expected.

Brokered CDs can offer competitive rates and the convenience of managing them alongside your other investments. Just be aware of any commission costs and understand the market risk if you need to sell before maturity. For investors who plan to hold to maturity, brokered CDs provide the same guaranteed returns as bank CDs with potentially better rates and easier management.

5. Set up a cash management account at a robo-advisor

If you already have a robo-advisor account or are looking for a high-yield cash management account, then turning to a robo-advisor could be a great option. Two of the largest independent robo-advisors – Wealthfront and Betterment – have both been clamoring for new deposits and offer better-than-average yields.

Wealthfront currently offers a base rate of 3.30 percent APY on cash balances, while Betterment provides 3.90 percent APY. These rates significantly exceed the national average for savings accounts and come with FDIC coverage through partner banks.

You can get an account set up quickly, and easily move money around to different accounts. Then if you're ready to invest with the robo-advisor, you can move money to a fee-charging investment account and get started. A robo-advisor is an excellent choice for cash savings.

Make sure you choose the best brokerage for you

Each brokerage is different, and doing your research is crucial because fees and trading costs can potentially eat into your returns substantially.

- Consider fees and minimums when evaluating brokerages. Some charge account maintenance fees or require high minimum balances, while others offer fee-free accounts with no minimums. Commission-free trading has become standard, but some brokerages still charge for certain transactions.
- Evaluate the cash yields offered by different brokerages, as these can vary significantly. Some offer competitive rates automatically, while others require you to actively choose higher-yield options.
- Look at additional features like research tools, customer support quality, and user interface. If you plan to use the account for both cash management and investing, make sure the platform meets your needs for both functions.
- Check insurance coverage to understand how your cash is protected. FDIC insurance covers traditional bank deposits, while SIPC insurance protects brokerage accounts, though the coverage differs in important ways.

When is it better to stick with a savings account?

Brokerage accounts and savings accounts serve different purposes, so which one you need depends on your goals. It's not uncommon to have both types.

Brokerage accounts are usually for investing, while savings accounts are for building a nest egg – whether in the short or long term. For instance, you might use a savings account to store your emergency fund, which you might need to cover an expected expense or in the event of a job loss.

Savings accounts can also be used to save up for a specific goal, such as a down payment on a house or car. Or maybe you want to save for a vacation you've been wanting to take. These accounts are usually FDIC-insured, so when the time comes, the money will be there. Plus, high-yield savings accounts pay generous interest, allowing your money to grow passively over time.

Key takeaways

- Brokerage accounts can function like high-yield savings accounts by holding cash in money market funds or government bonds.
- Many brokerages offer competitive yields on cash balances, sometimes matching or exceeding traditional savings account rates.
- You can earn 2.5 percent to 3.8 percent on cash through money market funds, short-term bond ETFs or robo-advisor cash management accounts.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Why did they remake 'Faces of Death'?

And why is it so good?

By MARK OLSEN
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Maybe you saw it during an '80s sleepover. Or as part of a dare. Presented as a macabre mix tape of actual death caught on film and video, the original "Faces of Death," first released in 1978, became a viral sensation in an era when that meant videotapes traded hand-to-hand.

To be clear, the movie wasn't what it claimed to be, but a bizarre blend of staged scenes and found footage, which only heightened its notoriety as an unclean object. That it was banned in numerous countries only became part of its hook.

All of which makes it not the most obvious remake-friendly IP. But a new "Faces of Death" puts a decidedly contemporary spin on the story while keeping its volatile sense of disorientation and danger. Director Daniel Goldhaber, among the most dynamic young American filmmakers and whose previous features – "Cam," an identity thriller set in the world of online cam-girls, and "How to Blow Up A Pipeline," a heist caper about radical eco-activists – both have a furious sense of cultural engagement, makes for a seemingly unlikely choice for the project.

"I think 'Faces of Death' is inherently an extremely political object," says Goldhaber, 34, talking about the post-Vietnam context of the original faux-doc during a recent lunch in a West Hollywood cafe. "Even if you look at the film itself, it deals explicitly in linking domestic violence to genocide. I think the movie actually has quite a lot on its mind."

Goldhaber describes himself as someone who grew up on the internet. Originally from Boulder, Colorado, he was kicked out of five schools while growing up before eventually attending Harvard.

"Something that I have been feeling since I was young is a sense of difficulty connecting in real life," he says. "But then a feeling that the way that I was connecting through this kind of mediated platform was also fundamentally disrupting my sense of self."

Bringing a new "Faces of Death" to the screen has been a long process. It was sometime in 2019 when Goldhaber and his frequent collaborator Isa Mazzei first worked up a pitch after being approached by executives at Legendary Entertainment about the project. The finished movie will finally have its world premiere on April 5 as part of the inaugural Beyond Chicago, then play L.A.'s Aero Theater on April 7 and the Overlook Film Festival, a horror connoisseur's mecca in New Orleans, on the 9th before being released nationwide in theaters on April 10 by IFC and Shudder.

"When you go back and watch the original, you're like, 'Oh, this isn't particularly good,'" says Goldhaber in a deep baritone with a quiet, steady confidence. "These aren't particularly convincing special makeup effects. We've seen beheadings – we actually know what that looks like and this isn't quite believable anymore. And there's something very profound about that."

"What is it like living in a world in which you can see anything you want at any time that you want?" he asks. "What does it mean when the most cursed and terrifying piece of media that most people could name is now beamed into everybody's pocket 24 hours a day? And the largest tech companies in the world are extracting profit from it? That feels like a profoundly disturbing shift in our relationship to violence and media."

Where the original film centered around a scientist-interlocuter (actually an actor, Michael Carr) guiding viewers through a tour of the grisly footage, the new film has a proper plot. A young woman in Louisiana, Margot (Barbie Ferreira), who has isolated herself after a brush with internet infamy, is an online content moderator for a short-form video platform. Every day, she steeps herself in the worst imagery the internet has to offer. When she notices a series of videos that seem to be all too real, she comes to realize they are re-creating snuff scenes from the infamous "Faces of Death."

Her unofficial investigation brings her to the attention of the unstable man behind the videos (a deeply unsettling Dacre Montgomery), who decides to make her his next victim, setting in motion a game of cat and mouse. Musician and actor Charli XCX also has a small role as one of Margot's co-workers with a far more blasé attitude to what they do.

In a video interview from her home in Los Angeles, actor Ferreira says while shooting "Faces" she was listening to a lot of true crime podcasts, watching violent online videos and had to actively protect her vocal cords. "Being a scream queen is not that easy," she says with a laugh.

Once shooting was done, she says she decompressed by watching "SpongeBob SquarePants" and decidedly more wholesome fare, "just to make sure that the brain was cleared out."

Ferreira initially gained notoriety as an online personality with a popular Tumblr account before transitioning to modeling and then acting, most notably in the first two seasons of the series "Euphoria." She quickly connected with Goldhaber and Mazzei's script.

"For me, the internet has always been this really incredible tool, because it's helped me for getting me everywhere that I am now," says Ferreira. "But it's also very dangerous. I have a lot of boundaries and lines around what I can do, for myself."

Goldhaber and Mazzei briefly dated in high school in Boulder, where they both grew up.

"It's a very cute story," admits Mazzei in a separate call from Los Angeles. "We've had such an enduring friendship after being high school sweethearts. It's kind of nice."

The pair would go on to collaborate on local theater productions and eventually films. "Faces of Death" is formally credited on-screen as "a film by Isa Mazzei & Daniel Goldhaber."

"He really wants to involve people to the level that they want to be involved," says Mazzei, co-writer and executive producer on "Faces," of Goldhaber's ability to be inclusive. "There's definitely his vision. But any film is so collaborative that it's hard to parse out who actually came up with what. I think that people are drawn to working with Danny because he does make you better. He pushes you to find the best thing in yourself."

Mazzei adds, "Unfortunately with the structure of the way credits work, there's no actual official way to say, 'Hey, we made this movie together' other than to share a film-by credit. But that's very much what it was. From the beginning, we came up with every step together, we cast it together, we did all of that together."

"I think he's the future," says Ferreira, quick to recognize Mazzei as well. "They have fresh eyes on the way that we think of contemporary cinema. I like the way that they think and I like the way that they present their art. And so I was really aligned with them immediately."

Goldhaber recalls the summer in the early 2010s he spent as a content moderator for a fledgling internet company a "fundamental point of inspiration." He learned then that people who post extreme content often flock to new sites and flood the system until they are shut out and eventually move on to somewhere else. Goldhaber saw content so disturbing that he prefers not to talk about it. "I don't know if I want to say," he adds quietly. "I mean, really upsetting stuff."

"All of a sudden I'm looking at really horrific images and at first you have nightmares – and at a certain point you kind of adjust," he says. "And I found that really disturbing. I also thought that it was an interesting prompt for a movie that could be a riff on 'Blow-Up,' 'Blow Out,' 'The Conversation,' these movies about somebody who finds something and then they can't stop digging into it."

Some of the imagery seen by Ferreira's character is genuine content culled from online, carefully trimmed.

"We always knew that there would be real death in our movie," Goldhaber says. "It was extremely hard to get that content into a wide-release theatrical motion picture. It was one of the big struggles of this movie because I think it's one thing when you're watching this privately on your phone. It's another thing when it's being recontextualized as part of a communal experience in a theater. There's a much greater sense of moral peril to consuming that. And that was the exact provocation that we were interested in. There was always something dangerous about it."

Goldhaber says the film was "100 percent finished" around June 2024, adding, "I haven't seen the movie in two years." In the time since, he has been working on a number of other projects in development and has most recently been living in Berlin.

As to the delay in the film's release, Goldhaber says, "It ultimately just took time to find a distributor that was willing to really stand behind what we're saying. And that's not always a partnership that can be formed quickly. It just took time."

His prior movie "How to Blow Up a Pipeline" originally premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2022 and was released theatrically in 2023. Though it had strong reviews and an exciting young cast, it failed to catch on with broader audiences, only bringing in around $1 million at the box office.

For Goldhaber, the response to "Pipeline" became instructive for his work becoming less prescriptive. He points to Ari Aster's small-town social satire "Eddington" as a film that is reflective of its moment without being didactic.

"It's not that I was saying, 'Hey, go blow up pipelines,' but [rather] really think about how you're engaging in this conversation," he says, "think about the kind of actual moral calculus of the world around you."

Having worked hard to obtain an R rating, the "Faces of Death" team has more recently run into issues with the MPA regarding the imagery on its posters. Putting the experience of making "Faces of Death" in perspective, Goldhaber references Jean-Luc Godard's famous dictum that every film is a documentary of its own making.

"I think when you are making a film that is confronting one of the ultimate taboos in cinema, you're going to have a tough time," he says. "And I was a bit naive to think it would somehow be smoother. But I don't regret how difficult the process has been because I think it's made for a cultural object that I hope is going to entertain people and scare them and also make them think."

And while many of today's filmmakers retreat into period pieces or fantasy because they do not want to show a world of smartphones and the way life is lived now, Goldhaber's "Faces of Death" confronts contemporary technology head on.

"I think that people are choosing not to depict it," Goldhaber says of the relationship between modern movies and modern life. "Now, every day we send GIFs, we send photos, we send videos, we send memes. It's a different way of communicating with one another. And I think it's incumbent on filmmakers to reflect the modes of language of the time.

"The problem is that a lot of the filmmakers who have the most presence in the industry, the most power, did not grow up in that media environment," he says. "And so as a result, they're making films that are fundamentally out of step with the current times.

He points to Mark Fischbach's "Iron Lung," a low-budget self-distributed sci-fi horror film that earlier this year successfully transitioned an audience from YouTube to movie theaters as a point of inspiration and possible path forward.

Goldhaber's reimagining of an ominous relic from an earlier era of media consumption may capture for audiences the sensation, for better or worse, of what life can be like in an ultra-connected world.

"As much as Hollywood wants to tell the story to itself that it's dying or that theatrical is dying," says Goldhaber, "the problem is not that audiences don't want to go to the theater. The problem is that they are not getting movies that are really made for them, that reflect their lives the way Hollywood at its best has always reflected the world around it."

Fearlessly revisiting a project many thought shouldn't be touched, Goldhaber is pushing Hollywood toward an uncertain future – whether it wants to go there or not.

Dacre Montgomery in the movie "Faces of Death," directed by Daniel Goldhaber.
IFC Films / TNS

MOVIE REVIEW

Nintendo and Illumination / TNS

Luigi, left, voiced by Charlie Day, Mario, voiced by Chris Pratt, Yoshi, voiced by Donald Glover, and Princess Peach, voiced by Anya Taylor-Joy, have an adventure in space in "The Super Mario Galaxy Movie."

'The Super Mario Galaxy Movie' is a hyperspeed sequel and a letdown

By MARK MESZOROS
The News-Herald (Willoughby, Ohio) (TNS)

After its release in 2023, "The Super Mario Bros. Movie" grabbed more than its fair share of coins, earning more than $1.3 billion and ranking among the highest-grossing animated flicks of all time.

The people behind the movie – the result of a partnership of video game giant Nintendo and Illumination, the studio behind the beloved Minions and more – obviously know what they're doing.

No doubt the megahit's sequel, "The Super Mario Bros. Galaxy Movie" – in theaters this week and coming for your family's spring break dollars – will do well, pleasing the younger viewers with its nonstop visual wonders and sugar-like highs.

However, there is less time around here for adults, save, perhaps, for Nintendo superfans, with "Galaxy Movie" peddling a largely incoherent story with little in the way of emotional payoffs.

About a third of the way through it, we wished there were a reset button.

Based on 2007's "Super Mario Galaxy," the third video game release in the decades-long franchise's 3D era and a huge hit itself, and its 2010 follow-up, "Super Mario Galaxy 2," "Galaxy Movie" is directed by the returning tandem of Aaron Horvath and Michael Jelenic ("Teen Titans Go!") and penned by returning scribe Matthew Fogel ("Minions: The Rise of Gru").

Likewise, the key voice actors are back, with Chris Pratt as Mario; Charlie Day as his brother and partner in plumbing, Luigi; Anya Taylor-Joy as Peach, princess of the fantastical Mushroom Kingdom; Keegan-Michael Key as her loyal servant, Toad; and Jack Black as the villainous Bowser, who may be in the process of figurative growth after having been literally shrunken down and imprisoned by Peach.

The story begins on another planet and with another princess, Rosalina (Brie Larson), who cares for myriad Lumas, adorbs star-like creatures who float around and speak in child-like voices. When this mother of stars tries to tell them a bedtime story about a princess named Peach, they instead insist on hearing the one about the plumbers.

'The Super Mario Galaxy Movie'

★★

MPA rating: PG (for action, mild violence and rude humor)

Running time: 1:38

How to watch: In theaters

"The plumbers!" they chant, and she relents – even though she'd told them that one the night before.

She gets only so far into the tale, however, before realizing a thunderous sound is approaching the castle. Bowser's son, Bowser Jr. (Benny Safdie), has come to collect her to make use of her powers and, after a little skirmish, his Magikoopa adviser, Kamek (Kevin Michael Richardson), proudly congratulates him on his first princess-napping.

A Luma visits Peach, telling her that Rosalina had said that if anything happened to her, Peach would help. And help she does, with Toad in tow, leaving the boys – along with new pal Yoshi (Donald Glover), a cute and friendly dinosaur they picked up on a recent plumbing job – to mind the kingdom. Soon, though, that trio is off to try to help Peach.

And they all get help from an outsider, a high-flying visitor from another Nintendo series.

"Galaxy Movie" borrows more than story from the "Super Mario" games, the filmmakers again getting mileage from the characters, say, jumping from moving platform to moving platform, using power-ups to defeat an enemy and employing top-level problem solving. Sure, it all seems less fresh this time, but it's fine.

Plus, as is the case with many a modern animated film, the visuals are incredibly impressive. Even the way the camera moves throughout this bright and punchy digitally created world can be a wonder to behold.

The voice work is, as you'd guess, solid across the board. The real standout, though, is Black ("A Minecraft Movie"), whose voice is modulated early on in the tale when he's a diminished version of himself, which is fun. The actor helps give something approaching actual depth to Bowser, regardless of whether he's big or small at the time.

In fact, the closest "Galaxy Movie" comes to having an emotional anchor for the film is Bowser's inner conflict when it comes to wanting to stand by his son, who's become an ambitious chip off the ol' block, and his newfound fondness for Mario and Luigi – he's in a book club with the latter, while the former has kept him at a distrustful distance. Disappointingly, though, Fogel's screenplay drops that particular ball, presumably in the name of setting up a third movie.

Other plot elements could have been expanded upon – Mario's crush on Peach or Peach's mysterious background – but the bare minimum is done.

With its fast-paced, planet-hopping antics, "Galaxy Movie" is likely to keep the kids occupied for an hour and a half, which may alone be worth the price of the tickets. Just know, Mom and Dad, that you'll likely want to unplug afterward.

MOVIE REVIEW

Dan Levy's new Netflix series *'Big Mistakes'* a little too loud

By MOIRA MACDONALD
The Seattle Times (TNS)

If you loved "Schitt's Creek," and looked forward to the new series from its co-creator Dan Levy because you were hoping for another "Schitt's Creek" ... well, be prepared to act like a disgruntled pelican, because "Big Mistakes" is something else entirely. There are, on the surface, some similarities: A perpetually bickering brother/sister duo (Levy and Taylor Ortega) are central to the action, as is their somewhat larger-than-life mother Linda (Laurie Metcalf). But where the beloved "Schitt's Creek" was all about sweetness and acceptance and lovable eccentricity, "Big Mistakes" – co-created by Levy and Rachel Sennott – is about yelling. Lots of yelling. Very, very loud yelling. Often very amusing yelling, particularly by Levy and Metcalf, but make no mistake: This show has a dark, albeit noisy, vibe.

Nicky (Levy) is a minister at the community church in his small New Jersey town, struggling with whether he should come out as gay and reveal his boyfriend, Tareq (Jacob Gutierrez), to his congregation. His sister Morgan (Ortega), a would-be actor, teaches public school and lives with her longtime boyfriend Max (Jack Innanen). Both siblings are doing their best to cope with Linda, who's in the midst of a very dramatic run for mayor of the town, and their too-perfect sister Natalie (Abby Quinn), who is running Linda's campaign and is her obvious favorite. (Metcalf, in the opening episode, tells us everything we need to know about Linda's relationship with her children when she announces the two of them as "Nicholas and ... Morgan," as if for a moment she'd forgotten her second daughter's name.) Oh, and a brief encounter in a convenience store involving a stolen necklace gets Nicky and Morgan irretrievably tied to organized crime. As the title says, this is a big mistake.

'Big Mistakes'

Rating: TV-MA

How to watch: Netflix

For its eight episodes, "Big Mistakes" takes us through Nicky and Morgan's harrowing and frequently shrieky adventures while they do "favors" for a group of sinister dudes with Russian accents and flashy taste in jewelry. And that's the problem: The bad guys are interchangeable – they're like every mobster you've seen in every organized-crime-themed movie or TV show – and not very compelling. Nicky and Morgan and Linda and Natalie, particularly when they're not yelling, are interesting, nuanced, funny characters, and you wish they were in a show that didn't involve them having to constantly interact with all those dull baddies.

Levy's Nicky, despite his youth-pastor wardrobe (why does he always have a long, dangling belt on?), shares some DNA with David Rose of "Schitt's Creek"; not least his excellent eyebrow-wrangling and his hilarious way of seeming perpetually on the verge of utter panic. ("YOU'RE BEING VERY DRAMATIC," Nicky screams at Morgan, dramatically.)

Spencer Pazer / Netflix / TNS

Taylor Ortega, left, as Morgan and Dan Levy as Nicky in "Big Mistakes."

He and Ortega, who makes skilled comedy from Morgan's delight at finding out that she's rather good at crime, make a charismatic team. But you wish that this character could have a little more time to grow; there's something quite touching in his interactions with Tareq, or in the way he looks hurt when a mobster notes that his sister is tougher than he is, but too often Nicky's actions don't entirely make sense (and aren't quite funny enough to make that forgivable).

But I would have happily watched an entire season of just Nicky and his mother, whose extremely complex relationship is in dire need of an enormous amount of therapy. (Linda, at one point, comments about the pain of giving birth to Nicky, which he quickly counters by pointing out that he was adopted. "I birthed you emotionally," Linda shoots back. "Which is just as painful.") Levy's clearly not afraid to share a screen with an absolute legend – rest in peace, dear Catherine O'Hara – and the great Metcalf owns this series; things perk up whenever she's on screen. This woman is perpetually dialed up to 11, and in the hands of a lesser performer might have been thoroughly exhausting, but Metcalf makes her so funny you can't look away. Linda, at one point, proves her own trustworthiness by blabbing somebody's elaborate secret to her children and saying solemnly, "That is a story I will take to my grave." You believe that she believes it – while you're laughing.

It's understandable that Levy might want to wander far from the "Schitt's Creek" model; lightning rarely strikes twice, and "Schitt's Creek" in its final seasons found true greatness. "Big Mistakes" suffers in comparison, as most shows would; maybe it needs a little more time to find its way. And maybe the volume turned down just a bit.

Kevin Smith on his 'relevancy chase,' Jay and Silent Bob's future

By ADAM GRAHAM
The Detroit News (TNS)

Amy Sussman / Getty Images / TNS

Kevin Smith speaks onstage at Walt Disney Pictures' "TRON: Ares" Panel during 2025 Comic-Con International: San Diego at San Diego Convention Center on July 25, 2025, in San Diego.

DETROIT — Kevin Smith is a first-rate, grade-A talker.

The filmmaker and Gen X poster child has used his voice to build and sustain a fan base for more than three decades, following "Clerks," his breakthrough black-and-white 1994 comedy about a couple of foul-mouthed New Jersey convenience store workers and the world they inhabit.

His universe expanded with follow-ups "Mallrats," "Chasing Amy," and "Dogma," all of which feature Smith as his trench coat-wearing Silent Bob character, and his sex-crazed stoner bud Jay, played by Jason Mewes. His world outside the movies grew as he became an early adopter of both blogging and podcasting, and he's been a fixture in the world of comic books and fan conventions since before the Marvel Cinematic Universe was a thing.

Smith will be at Astronomicon April 10-12 at the Ann Arbor Marriott at Eagle Crest in Ypsilanti, where he'll meet fans and lead a panel on all things Kevin Smith.

We talked to the 55-year-old about his career, the state of Hollywood and his unassailable sense of ambition. He talked a lot, and we did our best to keep up. (This conversation has been edited for length and clarity, and to clean up a lot – but not all – of Smith's cuss words.)

Q: Question: You're headed to Metro Detroit for Astronomicon. What's your dream venue for speaking engagements? How big of a venue do you think you could fill?

A: It's so f------ funny you say that, because I've always wondered that. Putting a---- in seats is a lot of what I do on a daily basis, whether that be making a movie and hoping people come, or, more literally, in the case of Astronomicon, where I want as many people to show up as possible. So I spend an inordinate amount of time thinking about that. And there have been moments where I'm like, how long would I have to take myself or me and Jay out of the marketplace to sell out X, Y, and Z? When we did the "Red State" tour years ago, it was the first time where I was taking my movie out myself, and we kicked off the tour at Radio City Music Hall. That's a 6,000 seater, and we did like 3,000 people, which was the orchestra level. The balcony was empty as s---. I often wonder, could I ever sell it out? What would I need to do to sell it out? Because sometimes you feel like, "Oh man, I've got unfinished business. I didn't sell out Radio City Music Hall!" You have these little breadcrumbs in life, and it's like, I still have yet to do that to my satisfaction. It sounds dopey to say, and it doesn't mean that I'm suicidal or anything. But it gives you a reason to wake up in the morning and try again.

Q: What drives that sense of 'unfinished business' for you?

A: I've realized the main thrust of my entire f------ existence is this relevancy chase, this hunt for nonstop relevancy. My job every morning is to wake up and make a bunch of strangers care about what I think and what I'm doing. And so I built up this little cottage industry doing just that. And it's a tender trap, man. It was beautiful, the prospect of getting paid just to be me. Oh my god, I've won. I've cracked the code! But that means you then have to figure out how to make people give a f------ about you from now until the end of time. And I've been doing that for 32 years now. And let me tell you, it doesn't get any f------ easier.

But I've somehow stretched this into a three-decade journey, so, no complaints there. But once you've been doing it this long, then you're like, well, f---, I don't want to stop. Like now what, go back to Quick Stop? F--- that. So, you know, welcome back again, my friends, to the show that never ends. And you try to figure out how to add one more link, let the tail grow a little bit longer. I never saw that s--- coming when I began this journey.

Q: How has your perception of relevance shifted during that time?

A: There's no f------ manual for any of this, right? So let me give that as a heads up to any artist out there who's like, "I want to make myself part of my art." Just know that's the cost that comes with it. And some people, where they're standing, it's like, "f---, I'll pay that cost," but you don't know. I went crazy a few years ago, and I think the core of it was like, "Jesus, what would life have been like if I didn't have this incessant f------ need to make people give a s--- about my thoughts?" But then again, I would have been on the outside looking in going, "Oh, what if I had done this? What if I could be somebody like that?" Like, I already know what it's like to be on the inside. And you think once you're in, f---. But then there's another inside. And then there's another inside, inside of that.

So I've still got my nose pressed up against the glass. There are people behind me, looking with their noses pressed up at the glass, wishing they were where I was. But I've still got my nose pressed up at the glass going, "Oh, f---, that'd be cool to be over there." And I guess that's ambition, something that my father was never cursed with. He was very happy to just have a job to pay for his wife and kids; he didn't give a s--- about a career. He worked at the post office, he's like, "This'll do." But, you know, his dopey ass f------ third child was cursed with ambition, and that ambition just don't f------ stop. There's no finish line, there's no sense of, "now, I am full." It's not necessarily that you want more, like you're greedy, but ambition just don't let you go to sleep, and it wakes you up at night.

And that's the only thing I'd warn a young Kev about. Like, "Hey man, just know that if you're lucky and you get in, it's not going to end." And I bet you I wouldn't have changed a thing. All I would have heard was, "What? I get to make movies?" That's all that would have mattered, not the cost that comes along with it. That all being said, the cost is minimal, the gains are immense, and I'm not just talking about monetarily. I'm talking about waking up and feeling, like, "I'm heard." One of the greatest gifts you can give a human being is feeling like they've been heard. That's why everyone's all over social media, people want to be heard.

Q: Was that sense of ambition in you before you made "Clerks," or did it kick in after?

A: It really kind of kicked in after. It's not like I was one of those kids like Spielberg, running around with the Super 8 camera in his backyard. I just loved movies, right? But it never occurred to me to make one. My old man sat next to me, watched movie after movie, and never once said, "You could do this." We weren't a part of that world, and he wasn't part of that generation where you tell your kids, "Son, you could do anything." He was part of that generation that was like, "See that mountain? Never climb it. You'll f------ fall." So I sat next to a dude, movie after movie, never once said, "You should do this for a living." Movies were something other people did and we consumed, and that was that.

So growing up? No ambition, man. My greatest ambition was like, well, I've worked at a lot of delis. I know how to make a sandwich. Maybe I can own the deli one day! And then I go see Richard Linklater's "Slacker" on my 21st birthday, and suddenly it all clicks. Then I'm like, wait, because I'd never seen anything like it. I was entranced, because I was like, "Oh s---, if this counts as a movie, I think I could make a movie, too." And then suddenly I get interested in filmmaking.

I can pinpoint it to the day. My ambition kicked in August 3, 1991. We went to a midnight movie, so by 2 a.m., I'm at the Post-Holland Jersey turnpike toll entry, and I turn to my friend Vincent Pereira and I was like, "I think I want to be a filmmaker." And that's where the journey begins, that's where the ambition begins. Prior to that, it was more subsistence. I worked at a series of convenience stores and stuff. When I was in high school, I wanted to be a writer for "Saturday Night Live," but I didn't go to Harvard, so that was never going to happen. I had no idea how to actualize what I thought I was gonna be.

Q: Did anyone help you at that time?

A: It was my sister that led me there. She was always pushing me, like, "You're meant for more, Kevin. Why are you selling yourself short?" So when I saw "Slacker" and decided I wanted to be a filmmaker, I said to my sister, "I saw this movie in New York and I think I want to be a filmmaker," and she goes, "Oh my god, great. Be a filmmaker. Don't want to be a filmmaker, be a filmmaker, in your head and heart with everything you do." Powerful words. Magic words, man. You're a filmmaker, you just haven't made your film yet. Boom. And then I just had to convince people along the way, and we all made ("Clerks") together, and we were off to the races.

Q: Did you always have this incredible gift of gab? Where did that come from?

A: I was just listening to myself speak and I was like, Christ, I sound like I'm on cocaine. But this is 32 years of this. If you ask my sister, she'll tell you I was a very quiet kid. My brother, too. Because I had to compete for screen time with two older siblings, right? So even though I was the baby and I definitely got favored, preferential treatment, my parents had already been through two kids. So they knew, maybe we don't have to be so uptight about it this time. Like, you know, "It don't matter if he's home by five, we can trust this one." So I think because of that, I got some preferential treatment, and since "Clerks," I've publicly received the same preferential treatment that my parents gave me at home. I've realized I've just been trying to replicate my childhood experience until the day I die. So yeah, I've loved the sound of Kevin Smith's voice my whole life. I can listen to him endlessly. But it ain't just today. This s---- been going on for decades.

Q: When you appear at cons, what's the the thing you hear the most from fans?

A: It is generally a five- to 10-minute story about the powerful role that I played in their life. Whether it's because it's something their parents shared with them and now their parents are gone, or it's because they found me at the same time they were starting to date and they took their future wife to see "Mallrats" and so they always had these references together.

This is the best part of the job, because this is where you meet the boss. This is your job report. Like, I don't have a very traditional structure to what it is I do, and I don't report to anybody except the audience. When you work for the audience, as they say, you'll never work a day in your life. So when you meet your boss, you're f---ing gracious, because that's where the check comes from. And if you're lucky, you actually like your boss. I like my bosses because they're Kevin Smith fans. We have a lot in common.

So this is like the State of the Union. This is where I get to collect more than just cash – and don't get me wrong, cash is definitely part of it, especially in these lean times where the movie business is falling apart. Thankfully, I get to live off nostalgia at this late stage of my career. But it's not so much the money as everything is a constant, non-stop hunt for relevancy. It's a constant reminder that I'm breathing rarefied air, that I can still go to a con and collect a line in front of me.

Q: You've been to Astronomicon several times. How do you feel about the atmosphere there?

A: Doing Astronomicon is lovely. The Detroiters have always treated us f------ well. While we didn't have an auto industry, there's something very similar between New Jersey and not just Michigan, but particularly Detroit. We're very kindred spirits, cut from a very similar cloth. And I've been f------ with Astronomicon now for the last few years. We grew a friendship and started working hardcore together. And so I'm delighted to be going back, man. It's still one of the best venues for a comic-con, ever.

Q: Growing up, what was your impression of Detroit from the movies, and how did coming here differ from what was in your mind?

Dan Aykroyd was not there, and I was looking for "Doctor Detroit." I was not looking for "Robocop." But the first time I went in was for "Chasing Amy." I remember that was my first trip into the area, and the thing that blew my hair back was they brought me to a hotel in, what, Dearborn or something? Like, they wouldn't bring me into Detroit. And I was like, aren't we going to Detroit? They're like, "Nobody goes to Detroit, man." They're like, "We'll go in tomorrow for one interview, but then we're going to get right out." So I went into the city and I saw the big f------ Joe Louis fist, and I didn't understand what the big deal was. I grew up next to Manhattan, like in the '70s it was nothing but muggings and crimes and our parents wouldn't even let us go to the city. So, I don't know, the Detroit that I first encountered when I went there was not as scary as they were saying it was. I was like, this seems safer than New York. So I don't know if it was because of the similarities in our ethos, but they have always embraced us, so I embraced right back.

Q: Do you vote for the Oscars? Are you a member of the Academy?

A: Yeah, I have been since '97. After "Chasing Amy," I got in. But my mom died in December, and my head was up my ass, so I didn't even vote this year. I totally spaced and boom, it all passed. Let's make it clear: I vote when it's important. But in the passing of my mom, everything went to s---, and so the thinking of like, "Hey, what was the best picture of the year?" was not at the forefront of my mind.

But the Oscars are always a very vivid reminder that while I work in a movie industry, I am not of that movie industry. Like, I've never been to the Oscars in my life. And I don't think I would go unless I had like a reason, and I don't think I'll ever have a f------ reason. So even when "Good Will Hunting" was nominated, which Scott (Mosier) and I were co-executive producers on, I didn't go because I was like, well, it's Ben and Matt's movie. So for me, I figure I'll get on the Oscars when I'm dead and they'll put up a clip of my stuff – if I'm lucky.

When I watch it, there are some people who I'm like, "oh, I've worked with that person, I've worked with that person," but mostly they're as foreign to me as they are to most people that kick back and watch the Oscars. And then honestly, it really sends you into like an existential thought process where you're like, "all right, well, I know these people's movies. Do they know mine?" It's a weird filter. You wonder if other people whose self-expressions you appreciate have appreciated your self-expression. So, it's weird. It always leads to the ambition kicking in. Even if it's something where I'm like, "I don't want to win an Oscar," seeing all these people makes me go like, why am I watching all these people's dreams come true? Go downstairs and make your own dreams come true! Start writing, conclude a project, finish a book, like, there's a zillion things you could be doing to make your moment, and instead you're watching a bunch of people make theirs. It doesn't have the same entertainment value for me.

Q: You mentioned the downturn of the movie industry. Do you think Hollywood can pull out of this? Are movies going to get smaller? What is happening to this industry that you are very much a part of, even if it feels like you're somewhat removed from?

A: Um, oof, I don't know. It seems harder and harder to get a thing done. I used to think that was just me, but it seems like that's across the boards. As the studio system contracts, there are fewer places to actually get a thing done, but to be fair, I wasn't working at most of those places anyway. Those places stopped f------ with me a long time ago, if they ever did. So if big studio movies are facing an existential moment like that, that only affects me as a moviegoer, really.

It's tough not to agree with everybody that like, oh my god, the whole thing is collapsing. They are making stuff, not as much, but they are making stuff. So long as you hold on to your soul, why not take another turn at the craps table that is the entertainment industry?

Q: What's that next turn at the table for you?

A: We're waiting for our last $500,000 so we can go make "Jay and Silent Bob: Store Wars." Fingers crossed. It's the next Jay and Silent Bob movie, which it's crazy that there's still money out there for Jay and Silent Bob, but it's still happening. It's been written for a red-hot minute. We were building toward doing it by the end of the 2025, but then that got pushed to the beginning of this year, and now we're hoping to start preproduction in late April. But when we started this process, there wasn't a world war happening, so, you know, that makes people go like, "well, wait a second," you know? So unless I'm paying it for myself, I'm usually at the mercy of the financiers, whoever's putting money into this affair.

And I love my career, but there are times when I've kicked myself going like, "Man, you should have been more about the money when you were a kid." Because if you were about the money, you'd have your own f------ money now, and you wouldn't necessarily be out there going like, "hey, brother, can you spare a dime?" to make your art. That's the only reason I regret not being a financial success, not being a hitmaker, because it would seem that it's easier to get things going if you've got that in your corner.

But I came up as an outsider artist, an indie Cinderella story. So I didn't have exposure to that aspect of the business. I made my own thing, and then I was welcomed with open arms and rewarded for making my own thing, and they were like, "Keep making your own f------ thing, man!"

Q: Well, in the '90s, making money wasn't the goal; it was part of the Gen X ethos to sort of reject that corporate mentality, right?

A: You've got to remember, we all wanted to sell our art. I remember Edward James Olmos being at the Independent Feature Film Market in 1993, when I was there with "Clerks." He was very passionately insisting to all of us emerging young artists, all these f------ wannabe filmmakers in this room, "Own your negative." He's going, "no matter what you do, you've got to own your negative. You made that art." Well, it fell on deaf ears because I was like, "buddy, we're all trying to sell our negatives." But with years and distance and age and wisdom, yeah, he was absolutely right. Like, I'll never own "Clerks" again in this lifetime, man. Disney bought it in perpetuity, and then when Disney sold Miramax, Miramax has shifted hands so many times. My movies are owned mostly by Paramount, oddly enough, and have been for a few years.

Q: "Clerks" hit me right at the right time. I was 16, and the '90s indie movie wave was just starting to boom. Did you have any idea what your movies would mean to teenagers at the time?

A: When I started my journey, I was not thinking about you. If anything, I was thinking about my contemporaries. I thought I was making movies for people in their 20s. Which is so f------ strange, because I had grown up watching movies that were aspirational, right? Like, I'm a kid in grade school and high school watching "Animal House." That's not about my life experience; that's about the next stage of life. So if I could go back in time and correct one thing, I would tell myself, "It's teenagers, b----. You are making movies for f------ teenagers." And "Mallrats" absolutely f------ solidifies that. So it's only within the last 10 years that I realized it was high schoolers watching "Clerks." Like, what could you possibly get out of "Clerks" being in high school? And yet it makes total sense. It's the next stage of life. I don't understand how a kid could identify with "Clerks" today, so it must just seem like some sort of historical document. But you are the reason I'm still working today. It ain't my age group, it's the people who were behind my age group who caught up with s--- on home video. You guys have kept it going, so I appreciate that. Thank you.

BOOKS

With 8 romcoms, a bakery and hot firemen, Abby Jimenez takes the cake

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

It's Abby Jimenez's world and we're just living in it.

Specifically, it's the Abbyverse, which is what the romance writer's fans dub the fictional world in which all of her characters exist, often recurring from book to book. Characters from the 2025 romantic comedy "Say You'll Remember Me" pop up in her new "The Night We Met" – in which gig economy worker Larissa is dating Mike but is really into his best friend Chris – and Mike will return as the star of Jimenez's next book.

"Even my very first book, 'The Friend Zone,' there are connections all the way up to the book I'm working on now for 2027," said Jimenez, who has sold 3 million copies of her books and lives in the Twin Cities.

Readers seem to love that, although Jimenez says it complicates things for Hollywood, which would like each story to stand alone. But the New York Times bestseller writer and owner of Food Network-famous bakery chain Nadia Cakes is trying to fix that, having recently signed to develop projects with a film and TV agency.

Between the calls from Hollywood, the cupcakes and finishing the last 10 chapters of the next book, Jimenez made time to talk to us.

On her last book's wild publicity tour:

Jimenez's social media – she has 400,000 Instagram followers and nearly 900,000 on TikTok – documented the response to her tour for "Say You'll Remember Me," including a Des Moines stop where turnout quadrupled the 500 expected attendees and a packed Toronto event interrupted by a fire alarm and the arrival of " a crew of hot firemen."

She had a talk with her publicist after the tour ended.

"I took over 40 flights. I was absolutely exhausted after that tour and I said, 'We're selling out these events literally, sometimes, in 20 seconds. We announce the tickets and they're gone. I can't keep doing smaller events that sell out immediately, when I could do something larger.' So, for my Minneapolis launch [at Heritage Center in Brooklyn Center], they got me a venue with 1,500 tickets. And it sold out in two days," said Jimenez.

One issue is that the more time she spends publicizing her books, the less she has to write new ones for her fans.

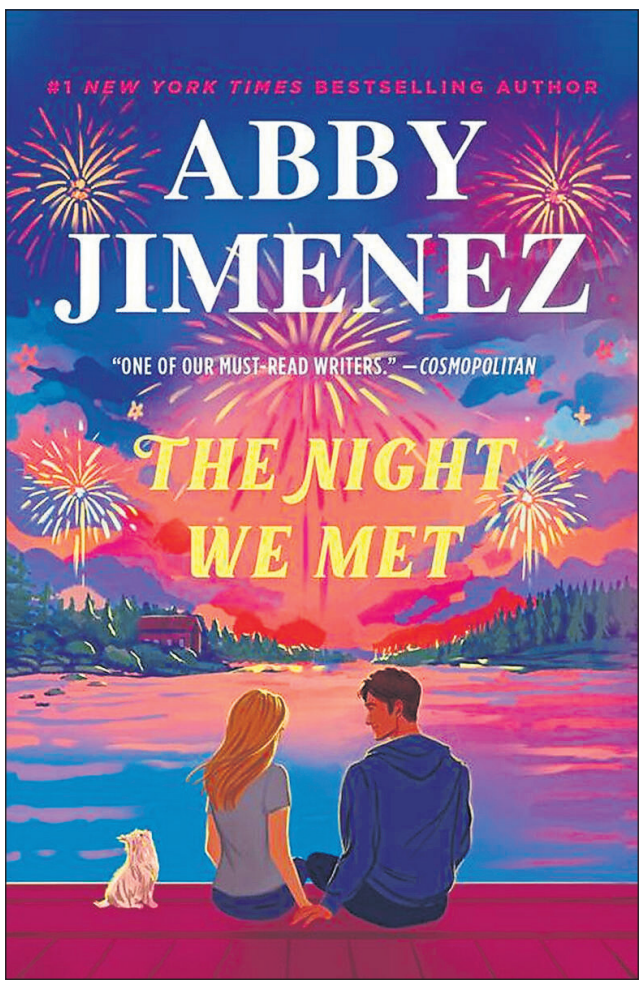
"My readers are, honestly, the best. I'm sitting here talking to you, looking at my bookshelves and I have all of these beautiful things my readers made or bought for me. I have a whole jar of friendship bracelets and things people knitted for me and crocheted," said Jimenez.

On a nut allergy being a major plot point:

"I like my characters to feel like real and layered people with relatable life issues," said Jimenez of the severe allergy Larissa deals with in "Night We Met." "And it was a good way to depict the carelessness of some people in her life who should have been looking out for her but really weren't."

Jimenez knows about food allergies, with a daughter who has less-severe reactions than Larissa's and Nadia customers with dietary restrictions.

"We have cupcakes that do not contain nuts but because we are not a nut-free facility – or gluten-free or dairy-free, for that matter – we do not recommend that people who have really severe allergies eat at Nadia," said Jimenez.



Grand Central Publishing / TNS

The author usually weaves shout-outs to Nadia Cakes into her Minnesota-set books. She opted not to do that with "Night We Met," for which consulting allergist and TikTok celeb Zachary Rubin helped her make sure she had all her EpiPens in a row.

On her favorite romance novel trope:

"I love ' enemies to lovers.' It's very hard to pull off because you have to be convinced these two hate each other for a reason that is legitimate and then convinced they changed their minds," said Jimenez. "To write, I like 'friends to lovers.' I feel like it's such a natural way to fall in love. 'The Night We Met' is definitely a 'friends to lovers' and a bit of a love triangle."

Jimenez recalls getting the idea for "Night We Met" back when she was writing her first book, "The Happy Ever After Playlist" (she wrote it first, although it was her second book published). But it took years for her to feel ready to capture the nuances of her three flawed leads.

"It took two years to write, and it lived in my brain a lot longer than that," said Jimenez. "I wanted the romance to be realistic. I didn't want us to hate anybody or to villainize anybody. So I waited to write it until I was a good enough writer to pull it off."

On a scene set at a karaoke night:

After Mike declines, Larissa asks Chris, who secretly loves her, to join her in a karaoke duet, which leads to awkward attempts to pick a song that's not too canoodling-forward (among the rejects? "You're the One That I Want").

"There's so much going on, if you unpack that scene. Mike's greatest fear is looking silly in front of people and what's really sad is that because Mike is afraid of looking silly, he drinks. And, as a result, ends up looking bad in front of people, anyway," said Jimenez, whose go-to karaoke song is Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams."

On readers, who help her get things right:

"With 'The Friend Zone,' my first book, I wish I had had the foresight to have a sensitivity reader. That book [and its treatment of fertility, which some readers objected to] taught me that if you write a book without due diligence, it could cause harm," said Jimenez.

Now, she checks in with experts on hot-button topics. While she's still writing her books, she shares them with trusted readers to make sure the story is coming together how she intended. And, even when she thinks she's done, she listens to editors who spot missing pieces.

"I know that I can make people laugh, give them an escape from the real world," said Jimenez. "But I also know my books touch people and can be a road map for people in bad situations."

That's why "The Night We Met" opens with a spoiler-filled author's note that offers trigger warnings. And why it reminds readers that, although books in the Abbyverse come with cartoony covers, there's a whole lot more waiting between their pages.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, March 28, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. The Night We Met (deluxe ed.). Abby Jimenez. Forever
2. Judge Stone. Davis/Patterson. Little, Brown
3. The Correspondent. Virginia Evans. Crown
4. Jojo's Bizarre Adventure: Steel Ball Run, Vol. 6. Hirohiko Araki. Viz
5. Beneath. Ariel Sullivan. Ballantine
6. The Traitor Queen (deluxe ed.). Danielle L. Jensen. Del Rey
7. Alchemised. SenLinYu. Del Rey
8. My Husband's Wife. Alice Feeney. Pine & Cedar
9. Kin. Tayari Jones. Knopf
10. The Butcher's Masquerade. Matt Dinniman. Ace

Hardcover nonfiction

1. The Anatomy of Awakening. Sue Morter. Hay House
2. Reparenting the Inner Child. Nicole LePera. Flatiron
3. Stripped Down. Bunnie Xo. Dey Street
4. If the Tree Could Speak. Tebow/Edwards. Thomas Nelson
5. Stand. Cory Booker. St. Martin's
6. Nothing Is Impossible with God. Shannon Bream. Harper Influence
7. Strangers. Belle Burden. Dial
8. Cheers to Monday. Amy Leneker. Wiley
9. A World Appears. Michael Pollan. Penguin Press
10. How to Test Negative for Stupid. John Kennedy. Broadside

Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. Hunt the Villain. Rina Kent. Bloom
3. Dear Debbie. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
4. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
5. Want to Know a Secret? Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
6. Project Hail Mary (media tie-in). Andy Weir. Ballantine
7. Love Song. Elle Kennedy. Bloom
8. Mistakes Were Made. Lucy Score. Bloom
9. Reminders of Him. Colleen Hoover. Montlake
10. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

Divorce rocks a '70s community in 'Lake Effect'

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

An entire neighborhood full of people is racing to tell us about a shocking divorce in "Lake Effect" and, in the dazzling final sentences of the book, we finally understand who they are. All of them.

Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney's bestselling "The Nest" was about adult siblings, bickering over an inheritance, and "Lake Effect" also has to do with badly behaved grown-ups, money and love. The first half is set in the late 1970s in Rochester, N.Y., where the adults (and, secretly, many of their children) are digesting the lessons of "The Joy of Sex." Finn's marriage to Honey, and Nina's marriage to Sam, are both joyless and sexless, so it's perhaps inevitable that neighbors Finn and Nina find their way to each other, in between potlucks and the high school plays of their children.

Sweeney details the impact of their pairing from multiple perspectives, including all four spouses and their adolescent offspring. The brief, funny chapters introduce an awful lot of voices but their points of view are so different (Nina and Sam's daughter Clara, for instance, hates everyone, so she stands out.) that we get a bead on everyone quickly.

"Lake Effect" is set about 15 years after TV's "Mad Men" but it feels similarly revelatory in its depiction of how much has changed, particularly for women – who, in "Lake Effect," still are determining if they get to have orgasms and jobs.

Work is one area of '70s life Sweeney doesn't capture particularly well. We're meant to see that Rochester is under the sway of giant companies such as Xerox, where Sam works and begins to form a secret life, but that culture doesn't really register in the novel. Neither does Nina's side hustle as a food columnist, a promising subplot that disappears faster than a bread cube drowning in a cheese fondue.

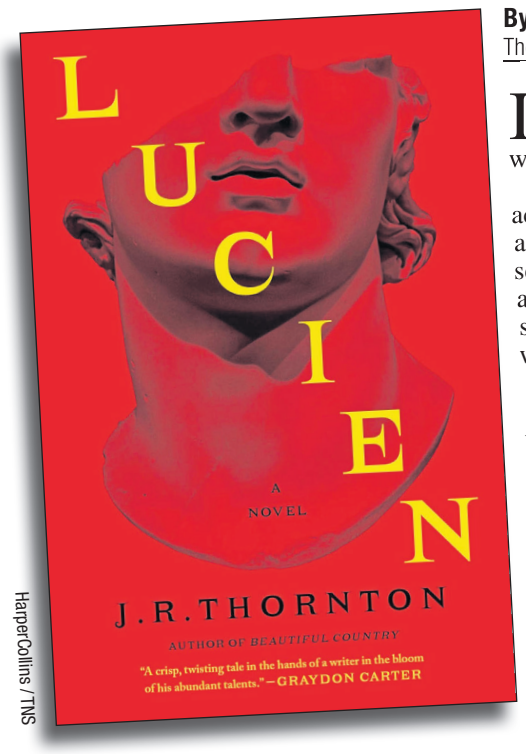
"Lake Effect" primarily is interested in the behavior of its vivid characters, who mostly refrain from telling each other about their feelings and motivations. Readers will have guessed, for instance, that Sam is gay long before anyone in the book does – because we read from the benefit of distance and without the restrictions the Jimmy Carter era placed on these people.

The struggle is real, as becomes clear when Nina, long estranged from Clara, finally tells her daughter why she did what she did, 20 years after we wish she had explained it: "Life is full of options, even if the world tries to tell you it's not. I wanted you to believe in choice, to trust your desires."

One thing all of the competing voices in "Lake Effect" make clear is that a choice can ripple throughout a community. But Sweeney does not present her characters' decisions as if they're part of a zero-sum game. When Finn leaves Honey, their lives are both improved, even if their offspring don't see that until many years later. Everyone in Sweeney's big-hearted book is given choices and those tiny, blink-or-you'll-miss-it opportunities add up to extraordinary lives.

REVIEW

Like 'The Secret History,' 'Lucien' is an unnerving campus tale


LUCIEN
A NOVEL
J.R.THORNTON
AUTHOR OF BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY
"A crisp, twisting tale in the hands of a writer in the bloom of his abundant talents." —GRAYDON CARTER
HarperCollins / TNS

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

If a character is compared to Icarus early in a book, it's not going to go well for them.

Soon after Christopher, the main character and narrator of "Lucien," arrives at Harvard University, a fellow student sees one of his paintings. It includes an angel the classmate assumes is Icarus, so he asks Christopher if he's familiar with the mythological character:

"I shook my head.

"'He flew too close to the sun and the wings melted off his back.'"

How much you wanna bet that Christopher is about to fly too close to the sun?

Another figure in Greek mythology also figures in "Lucien," in which Christopher's new roommate Lucien immediately decides Christopher should be called Atlas. It seems like a cool nickname until, many pages later, Christopher meets a young woman named Harriet who prefers to call him by his actual name because "Atlas wasn't very intelligent, you know."

Novelist J.R. Thornton, who also attended Harvard, probably doesn't need to pile the ominousness quite so high. It's clear from the moment Christopher meets Lucien that the latter is manipulative and unscrupulous, character traits that become especially problematic when Lucien learns that Christopher is a talented artist with a knack for forgery. Before you can say, "He's in way over his head," Christopher is.

"Lucien" fits neatly into the genre of campus novel, alongside such classics as Curtis Sittenfeld 's "Prep," Donna Tartt's "The Secret History" (especially) and John Knowles' "A Separate Peace," with its depiction of a bumpkin trying to fit in with all the prep school elites whose families own private planes and have tutors on speed dial for when academic emergencies arise.

Thornton captures the college scene with witty ease. Christopher and Harriet's first meeting is a comic gem, as the two awkwardly flirt while joking about Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman," E.B. White's "Charlotte's Web" and TV comedy "Arrested Development." It's no mystery why they fall for each other, or why kind Harriet is wary of Christopher's connection to the title character.

In the same way that the title character is not the protagonist of "Lolita," "Lucien" is really about Christopher. Lucien is devious and clever in not-especially-fresh ways but Christopher's naked need for acceptance into Lucien's world is easy to relate to, with the bonus entertainment value of both a criminal scheme that's bound to go sideways and a sneak peek at the fascinating world of forgery. While Christopher gets an education in how to fake provenance and age canvases, so do we.

Readers won't be surprised that things end badly in "Lucien" but they may be surprised by what Christopher takes away from that ending, by Christopher's enduring affection for Lucien and by what "Lucien" has to say about how friendships, even toxic ones, work.

AUTOMOTIVE

Hyundai Boulder Concept targets Bronco, Wrangler at New York show

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

New York Auto Show – Hyundai Boulder Concept.

Off-road parks are gonna get crowded.

Hyundai stunned the New York Auto Show this week with its brawny Boulder SUV concept. It's the first body-on-frame, truck-based SUV from the South Korean brand, going after Detroit icons Jeep Wrangler and Ford Bronco in the off-road space.

With General Motors Co. taking a pass on the affordable, mid-size, off-road SUV space to make the Chevrolet Blazer and six-figure GMC Hummer SUV electric vehicles, Asian makers have rushed in. Toyota has added body-on-frame competitors like the Land Cruiser and Lexus GX in the space where they already sold the popular 4Runner, and now here comes Hyundai which will also offer a U.S.-made pickup on the same platform by 2030.

"GM missed an opportunity," said auto analyst and Telemetry Vice President of Market Research Sam Abuelsamid at the Hyundai unveiling. "Especially when they decided to relaunch the Hummer brand as an EV. Now, they don't have anything to compete against the Asians or Bronco, Wrangler."

Hyundai has been on a sales tear in the United States, moving up to the fifth best-selling brand after Toyota, Ford, Chevrolet, and Honda with the second-fastest growth in 2025 (7.8 percent) after Toyota's 8.1 percent.

Asian automakers have had an eye on the profit-rich truck space where U.S. automakers dominate – but have struggled to be relevant.

Toyota is a distant fifth behind the Ford F-series, Chevy/GMC trucks, and Ram pickups in the 2.4-million-unit full-size segment with just 147,610 sales in 2025 in part because its doesn't offer heavy duty versions of its Texas-made Tundra truck. The Japanese maker has been more successful with its mid-sized, ladder frame-based Tacoma pickup and 4Runner, Land Cruiser SUVs.

Hyundai, like Honda, has tried to compete in the mid-size pickup segment with the unibody-based Santa Cruz – based on the same chassis as its family SUVs.

The Santa Cruz has struggled against the ladder-frame, stump-pulling Detroit icons, however, and was last in segment in 2025 with just 25,499 sales. The unibody pickup will be discontinued after this model year.

Which opens Hyundai's Alabama and Georgia factories for an all-new, ladder-frame platform. First up, the Boulder Concept (itself based on the Crater Concept seen in Los Angeles last fall) to be followed by a pickup concept at a later date. Expect Boulder production for the 2028 model year.

"The Boulder Concept's stout, ladder-frame-style construction has long been favored by U.S. consumers seeking trucks and SUVs capable of serious off-roading, towing, and hauling," admitted Hyundai in a press release. The Boulder and pickup will also be designed in the United States with steel coming from a new Hyundai Steel (a Hyundai subsidiary) plant in Louisiana.

The Hyundai's so-called "Art of Steel" design language also echoes that of the successful Bronco with a square jaw, boxy proportions, swollen fenders and huge, 37-inch all-terrain tires.

"The Boulder Concept demonstrates how Hyundai is seeking to give American customers more of what they want," said Hyundai CEO José Muñoz, who introduced the SUV. "Body-on-frame vehicles are the backbone of American work and adventure, and we intend to compete in the midsize pickup segment with everything we have. We are entering segments we have never competed in before, and we are doing it the right way: designed in America, built by Americans for American customers."

True to American tastes, the Boulder Concept boasts a tailgate-mounted spare tire, power-drop rear window, aggressive approach-and-departure angles, and tow hooks.

"I think the Boulder Concept is really significant," said analyst Abuelsamid. "Wrangler, Bronco, and Toyota Forerunner are the three leaders in that segment and it's an obvious place for Hyundai to expand their lineup. There's a lot of interest in these types of vehicles and Boulder is a really interesting design."

Mid-size off-roaders are typically motivated by V-6 and turbo-4 cylinder engines in order to reach the far corners of national parks.

"We could see a mix of internal combustions in Boulder – maybe their E-REV hybrid power train could find a home in a vehicle like this," speculated Abuelsamid.

Said Tom Zielinski, CEO of Detroit 4fest that takes over Holly Oaks ORV park north of Detroit every fall: "Americans are adventurous at heart and there is no better place to experience adventure than off-road. Auto companies are building amazing vehicles that come equipped to take you anywhere. Jeep Wrangler is a legend in this space and Ford Bronco has been a success so it is no surprise that Hyundai would bring a competitor to market. "

The interior of the Boulder matches the exterior's rugged ambitions with strong character lines and big knobs to adjust climate and volume. It also features trendy bits like movable screens that are unlikely to survive for production.

"Our body-on-frame Boulder Concept SUV is a four-wheeled love letter to the dynamic, off-road way of life that many customers have been asking us for in our future-focused research," said Hyundai Design chief SangYup Lee. "We are confident that something like this ultra-capable Hyundai SUV concept could more than fulfill the needs of this exclusive group of adventure seekers."

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

AUTO REVIEW

This is America's favorite piece of automotive costume jewelry

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Photos by Kia / TNS

2027 Kia Telluride Hybrid

Base price: $46,490-$57,590

Powertrain: Turbocharged 2.5-liter four-cylinder hybrid

Horsepower/Torque: 329/339 pound-feet

Fuel economy (combined city/highway): 31 mpg (estimated)

Fuel required: 87 Octane

Length/Width/Height: 199/78/71 inches

Ground clearance: 7.4 inches

Cargo capacity: 21-88 cubic feet

Towing capacity: 4,500 pounds

Among the venerable establishments along the sun-splashed boulevards of Palm Beach, Florida – where money isn't merely spent, it's performed – there exist jewelers that deal not in diamonds and discreet old-family emeralds. Instead, they sell costume jewelry, blazing constellations of cubic zirconia that sparkle beneath the chandeliers like the real thing after three martinis. And customers adore it.

Because here's the secret of the American psyche: Regardless of tax bracket, trust fund or the size of the yacht moored behind the house, everyone delights in the theater of something that looks vastly more expensive than it really is; the appearance of extravagance without the inconvenience of actually paying for it.

This brings us to the Kia Telluride, the automotive equivalent of Palm Beach cubic zirconia. It's a machine that rolls up to the valet line looking like it ought to belong to someone named Prescott III, while costing slightly less than the monthly wine budget at the Everglades Club. Naturally, the public has gone mad for it, embracing it with an enthusiasm usually reserved for tax cuts and free cocktails. Sales have risen 128 percent since its 2019 debut, now totaling 123,000 annually, each one produced at Kia's sprawling plant in West Point, Georgia.

So, when the time came for automaker to create the second-generation Telluride, you'd expect cautious evolution over creative revolution. And you'd be stunningly wrong. Kia has recast the Telluride in the company's Opposites United design doctrine, and suddenly, the Telluride is no longer the design outsider in company showrooms. It now wears the same bold, upright, slightly architectural look as its siblings, with lines sharp enough to slice bulgogi and lighting elements arranged like modern sculpture. The Telluride that once looked like a polite imitation of a luxury SUV now looks intentional, as if someone in a black turtleneck actually thought about it.

Which raises an interesting question.

Does the 2027 Kia Telluride still possess that marvelous quality of fabulous fakery, that Palm Beach sparkle that made the original Telluride so irresistible, or has it become something else entirely? Kia anticipated this existential crisis. And its response has been simple: pour on the luxury. Ladle it on like caviar at a hedge-fund wedding. The new Telluride arrives positively dripping with features.

You may specify your interior in engineered wood or carbon fiber, depending on whether your tastes run to yacht club or pit lane. There are heated seats for all three rows, ventilated seats for the first two, and enough acoustic insulation to render the outside world a largely irrelevant concern. There are not one but two wireless phone chargers, because clearly one would be an admission of limitation. A 14-speaker Meridian sound system stands ready to improve whatever music you may bring to it, while no fewer than seven USB-C ports and five 12-volt outlets ensure that every conceivable device may be powered, charged, or revived. Naturally, there's wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, tri-zone automatic climate control, a huge touchscreen and an interior trimmed in a convincing mélange of leather and/or faux suede. For those inclined toward mild adventure, there's even a ground-view monitor and a selection of multi-terrain all-wheel-drive modes, features that suggest capability, despite the lack of underbody skid-plate protection or any kind of low-range gearing.

Nevertheless, when it comes to motivation, what you get is a turbocharged 2.5-liter four-cylinder that produces 274 horsepower and 311 pound-feet of torque. It's paired to an eight-speed automatic gearbox, sending power either to the front wheels or, if you're feeling sensible, all four. Perfectly adequate, you might think. And it is, in the same way that a microwave meal is perfectly adequate.

But then you tick the hybrid box, and suddenly, things get interesting. The 2.5-liter engine is joined by electric motors and the gearbox is swapped for a six-speed automatic. The result is 329 horsepower and 339 pound-feet of torque. Yes, towing capacity drops slightly, from 5,000 pounds to 4,500, but honestly, if you're that concerned, buy a tractor.

What you should do is buy the hybrid. It's smooth, it's polished, and it delivers its power with the sort of effortless confidence normally reserved for much more expensive machinery. And the silence. Good grief, the silence. Unlike some hybrids that whirr and buzz like an annoyed kitchen appliance, this rig glides along using its electric motors so often you begin to wonder if the gas engine quietly resigned. Even when it does wake up, it does so with all the drama of a librarian turning a page.

Kia claims 31 mpg with all-wheel drive. Respectable. But on a 140-mile test drive, it somehow managed 41 mpg. Forty-one! That's the sort of number that makes you consider writing Kia a thank-you note. In short: get the hybrid. It's quiet, it's absurdly efficient and it makes the whole car feel like it's playing in a league it has absolutely no business being in.

The redesigned 2027 Kia Telluride hasn't abandoned its original charm. Instead, it has refined the illusion to the point where it scarcely feels like one anymore. What began as a cleverly executed imitation has matured into something altogether more convincing. It's a machine that delivers the look, feel, and experience of luxury with such composure that you stop questioning its credentials. It still deals in fabulous fakery, but now it carries itself with the calm, unhurried confidence of something that has long since settled the question of its own legitimacy.

Larry Printz is an automotive journalist based in South Florida.

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Campfire Audio makes excellent equipment

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Campfire Audio, based in Portland, Oregon, is an audio company that you need to be familiar with. I've tried many of their products over the years, and each impresses me from top to bottom. The last I tried were the Iris and Axion wired earbuds.

A little about Campfire Audio: They have been producing first-class audio products since 2015. They call themselves a small team of audio lovers who created more than 70 different in-ear monitors, along with cables and accessories. Once you have their audio playing in your ears, you'll understand how good they are.

The Iris was launched late in 2025 as an entry-level hybrid-designed in-ear monitor for everyday listening. For those wanting to get into high-fidelity audio, or as Campfire says, "dipping their toes into hi-fi for the first time," the Iris was designed for you. They have a rugged, yet elegant design featuring a transparent 3D-printed acrylic housing with stainless steel accents.

Campfire's **Iris** ($349) delivers sound just as expected, with clarity to the highest levels in each ear from premium 10mm ADLC dynamic drivers. Listening to them for hours delivered nothing but quality sound with any playlist, at any volume. Every tune and sound was balanced and just kept me wanting more.

Campfire's high-quality metal cables are included, along with a folding storage wallet and three sets of foam, silicone, and high and clear ear-tips. You also get a cleaning tool and a cleaning cloth.

Another solid choice from Campfire Audio is the **Axion**, built with their first-of-its-kind silicon dynamic driver. This was designed to let the Axion compact body deliver the rich, impactful sonic character found in dynamic drivers.

The Axion has a more on-the-go setup, with sound that's just as clear, with a good amount of bass at both high and low volume levels. Comparing them to the Iris, if I had to choose one, I'd take the Iris. But if I had never heard the Iris, the Axion sounded smooth and natural, with everything I would want out of my playlists. To challenge these thoughts, I had several friends test them, and none wanted to give them back – that said it all.

The body of the Axion ($249) is also eye-catching, like the Iris, with a transparent acrylic/internally dyed housing and gold PVD stainless accents. Campfire designed them to be worn like any other earbuds or flipped and worn over the ear, similar to an in-ear monitor.

They have a high-quality, plug-and-play custom USB-C cable with an inline microphone and button controls for hands-free calls and music playback. The cable provides improved fidelity and power to your earphones.

The included accessories are a mesh zipper carrying case, a two-pocket mesh bag to fit an earbud on each side, three foam ear-tips, three silicone ear-tips, and a cleaning tool and cloth.

There are differences between the models, but both offer first-class development and a solid construction with all the accessories you'll need. Campfire is an impressive company that delivers top-notch quality and protection under a 2-year manufacturer's warranty.

https://www.campfireaudio.com

ABOVE: The Campfire Audio Axion.

RIGHT: The Campfire Audio Iris.

Campfire / TNS

Pisen / TNS
The Pisen 140-watt Mega Charging Hub.

Pisen's 140-watt **Mega Charging Hub** does it all when you need charging on the go. Essentially, you can plug almost anything that needs charging into the hub, thanks to its variety of charging ports.

The desktop charger supports up to 8 devices simultaneously. This includes wireless charging for Apple Watch, earbuds, iPhones and other Qi2- and MagSafe-compatible devices. The ports include three USB-C, one USB-A and two standard AC outlets. And this is all in one AC-powered hub.

The Mega Charging Hub can deliver up to 140 watts from a single USB-C port. It has a built-in breathing light system and the light softly pulses to indicate power status, with adaptive voltage measurement reflected through a three-color display system showing green at 5V, yellow between 9V and 15V, and purple at 20V.

Safe charging is supplied by GaN technology, and nine built-in protection systems safeguard the devices being charged. This includes protection against overheating, short circuits, and other hazards. The top-sided magnetic wireless charging plate provides a rotation up to 65 degrees to view a charging smartphone in portrait or landscape modes.

Pisen's 140-watt Mega Charging Hub is available in black or yellow and includes a 6-foot 240-watt USB-C-to-USB-C power delivery fast-charging cable.

https://www.pisen.us/products/pisen-all-in-one-charger

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @gregg ellman.

TECH REVIEW

These two gadgets are all about *compatibility*

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Smart home equipment can work with various home automation ecosystems.

What does that mean?

There are plenty of devices, like smart deadbolts, cameras, light bulbs and smart plugs, and a host of other gadgets, but unless you're buying them from the same company, getting them to work together used to be a hassle.

Then some larger players, like Amazon, Google and Apple started allowing devices from other companies to work in their systems.

If you're serious about using smart home devices, you'll probably feel better about one ecosystem over the others.

If you're an iPhone/iPad/Mac user, you're likely to start with Apple's Homekit-compatible devices.

If you have Amazon Echo devices at home, you're more likely to buy bulbs or switches that are "Works with Alexa-certified."

The same goes for Google. If you use an Android phone, it would not surprise me to find you're building your system with devices that advertise "works with Google Home" on the label.

Now your better smart devices will work with more than one ecosystem.

I've been testing a couple of things from XThings, a smart device manufacturer that does its best to work with pretty much everything.

LEFT: Ulticam Dot wire-free security camera.

BELOW: Ultraloq Bolt NFC home key smart Wi-Fi deadbolt.

XThings / TNS

Ultraloq Bolt NFC home key smart Wi-Fi deadbolt

$199.99, ultraloq.com

This deadbolt from Ultraloq has a lengthy list of home automation platform compatibility.

It'll work with Xthings Home, Apple Home Kit, Alexa, Google Home, Samsung SmartThings and IFTTT.

The Bolt NFC is on the smaller side when it comes to smart deadbolts. It lacks the biometrics found on a lot of other models. This means you can't use a fingerprint or palm to unlock.

The Bolt NFC Home Key unlocks with a numeric code, or tap to unlock via NFC, which includes Android phone NFC and two included access cards, or Apple's Home Key, which can automatically lock or unlock with your Apple iPhone or Apple Watch. Finally, there is a traditional key to unlock the deadbolt.

The lock talks to your home Wi-Fi, so you can lock and unlock it when you are away from home.

The Bolt NFC looks very much like a traditional deadbolt, and its size means it will fit on most door situations. Installation is not difficult and the lock runs on eight AA batteries (included). The alkaline batteries in the box should last up to 8 months. If you want to upgrade to AA Lithium batteries, you'll extend the battery life to one year.

Setup via the app is quick and easy and you can configure access, make virtual key codes, view access logs and receive alerts when the door is open/closed or locked/unlocked.

The Bolt NFC has two models, one with Apple Home compatibility for $199 and one without it for $20 cheaper.

Ulticam Dot wire-free security camera

$69.99, ulticam.com

Ulticam is a full line of wired and wireless security cameras, and the Dot is one of their most versatile.

The Dot is a wire-free camera that connects to your Wi-Fi and runs for two to three months on four AA alkaline batteries. Switching over to Lithium AA batteries extends run time to four months (averaging 10 event recordings per day).

It's physically the size of a tennis ball and mounts to a small base via magnets.

You can mount the base to most flat surfaces, either with screws or with double-sided tape.

The Dot has 8 gigabytes of on-board storage for videos and it offers a rolling seven days of free cloud storage of events. It captures 2K video at a resolution of 2,560 by 1,440 pixels and had a 170-degree field of view. It has infrared night vision up to 10 meters away.

It has a siren you can sound and it also had a microphone and speaker so you can speak to people remotely through the app.

The camera is water resistant and it connects via Wi-Fi (2.4G or Bluetooth. It uses AI to help identify motion events.

The Dot is capable of recording even if its offline if you switch over to use the local storage.

The app allows for total control of the camera settings and access of the clips. Including sharing camera access with others.

I love the Dot's design. Its round shape lends itself to easy placement and it still has room on the inside for the batteries.

If you're looking for a very portable camera you can literally stick almost anywhere to record motion and events, the Dot is hard to beat for size, clarity and ease of installation and use.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

Technology can be a great help, if you can keep up

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

I've been thinking a lot about aging and technology, and I can't help but wonder how everyone handles navigating their personal digital lives differently.

"Aging in place" is the term for older people who are still living on their own, and technology can play a really big part in helping people remain independent.

The world revolves around the internet – that much is certain.

Even my 87-year-old mother-in-law has fiber internet service and knows its importance. Her kids (and their spouses) do so much to help her remain in her home, and it is assisted by fast internet service when we go to visit in her home.

Try picturing life without the convenience of online banking and investing, paying bills, shopping, accessing medical billing and hospital portals.

Those who cannot or will not embrace the new ways of accessing these digital service – and a host of others – will soon find out there is little choice.

Have you tried to visit a bank branch lately? How about trying to make a doctor's appointment? Need to check your medical test results? How about paying bills?

Heck, even paying for a parking meter requires a smart phone where I live.

All these things are so much easier over the internet – if you can wade through setting them up – and more importantly, troubleshooting them when they don't work or have changed.

I fear the world is leaving behind many of its older citizens.

Many of us in the Gen X and Baby Boomer generations are providing tech support for our parents and grandparents.

I do my best to help people navigate their technology through this column, but there are also a few good friends and relatives (mostly in their 80s) who call on me regularly when they can't figure things out on their own.

Their calls can be as easy as helping set up online access to a medical portal or helping reset a long-forgotten password or as difficult as updating an operating system or even changing their internet provider and setting up a new Wi-Fi network.

I wrote late last year about helping one of my older friends set up streaming on his TV for the first time. I did the same for my mom last year.

Mom also changed her internet service to save money last year and afterwards, it took an in-person visit to get all her Wi-Fi connected cameras and doorbell back online.

While I'd love to be able to come help everyone in person, it is not feasible, but I'd love to cover some of these topics for all of you through my writing. I'm currently gathering a list of topics that need some attention.

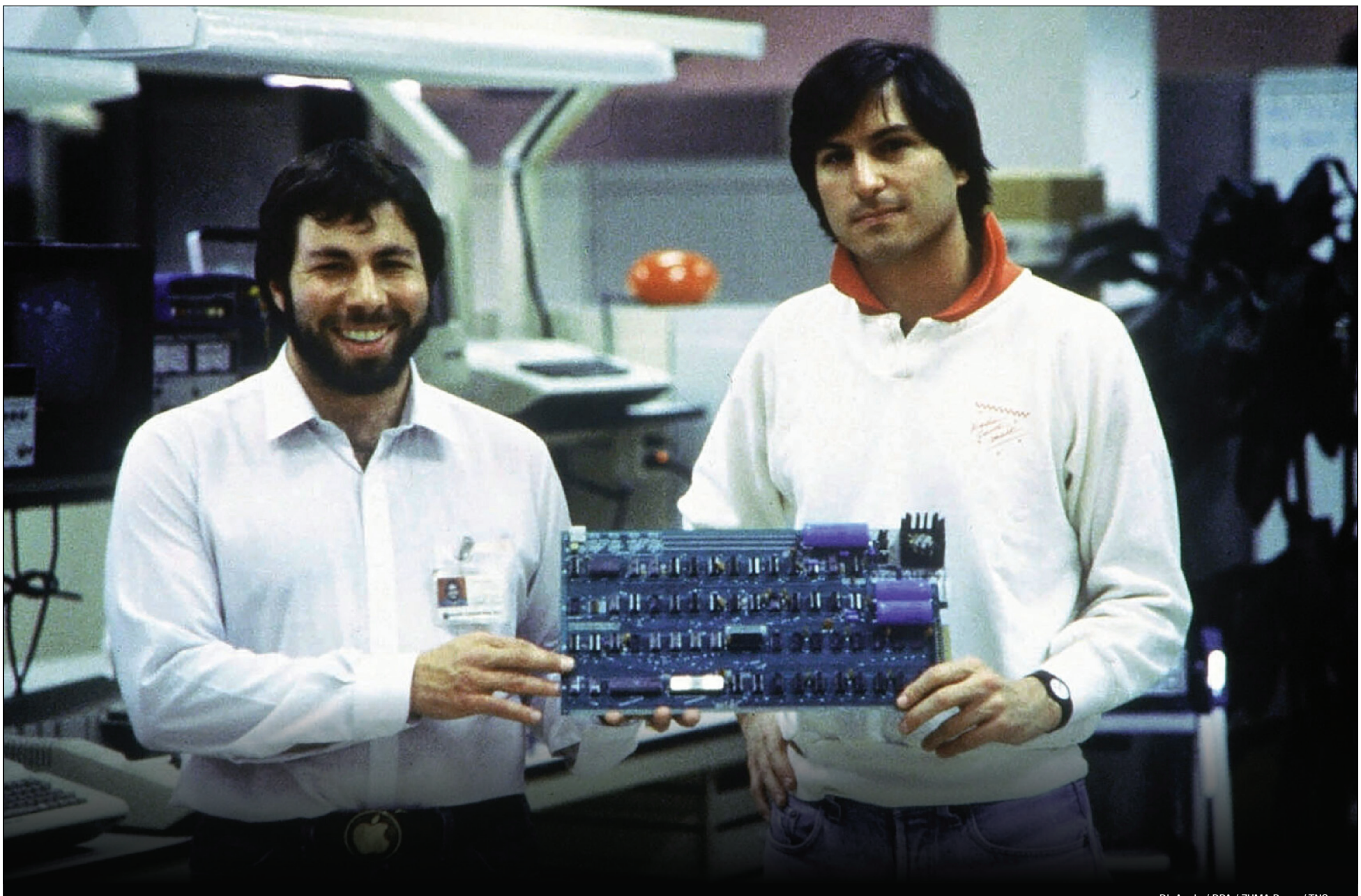
What's causing you grief in your technical lives?

I'm especially talking to people over the age of 65.

I'd like to hear your questions and complaints. I may or may not be able to answer your specific issues, but I do respond to everyone with at least some ideas and articles to explore to get you closer to a solution.

Please email your topics to me at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com and I'll share the best ones here with some of my answers.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service.



Db Apple / DPA / ZUMA Press / TNS

Steve Wozniak, left, and Steve Jobs, right, on Jan.1, 1978, in Mountain View, California. They founded Apple Computer in 1976.

Apple at 50:

How a garage startup became a $3.5 trillion titan

By QUEENIE WONG
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Fifty years ago, Steve Wozniak knew he built a great personal computer, but the young engineer couldn't convince his employer, Hewlett-Packard, to buy into the big idea.

"Five times they turned me down for the personal computer. I wanted Hewlett-Packard to do it. I loved my company, but now Steve Jobs and I had to go into business," Wozniak told The Times.

Wozniak and Jobs, both in their 20s, co-founded Apple with Ron Wayne on April 1, 1976.

Back then, personal computers were very expensive and rare. Apple would go on to revolutionize the tech industry, creating innovative, intuitive and beautiful gadgets billions of people would buy again and again.

Apple, now one of the world's most valuable and powerful companies, turns 50 this week.

From its humble beginnings when the founders worked out of Jobs' family garage, Apple has ballooned over the last five decades, opening a sprawling ring-shaped headquarters in Cupertino, California, and employing roughly 166,000 workers.

Its market value has surpassed $3.5 trillion, making it the second-largest company in the world after Nvidia. In the fiscal year ending in September, Apple reported revenue of $416 billion and a net income of $112 billion. The company has attracted a large loyal fan base with more than 2.5 billion active Apple devices worldwide.

"Apple is more than just a technology company. It's really a cultural icon," said Jacob Bourne, a technology analyst at eMarketer.

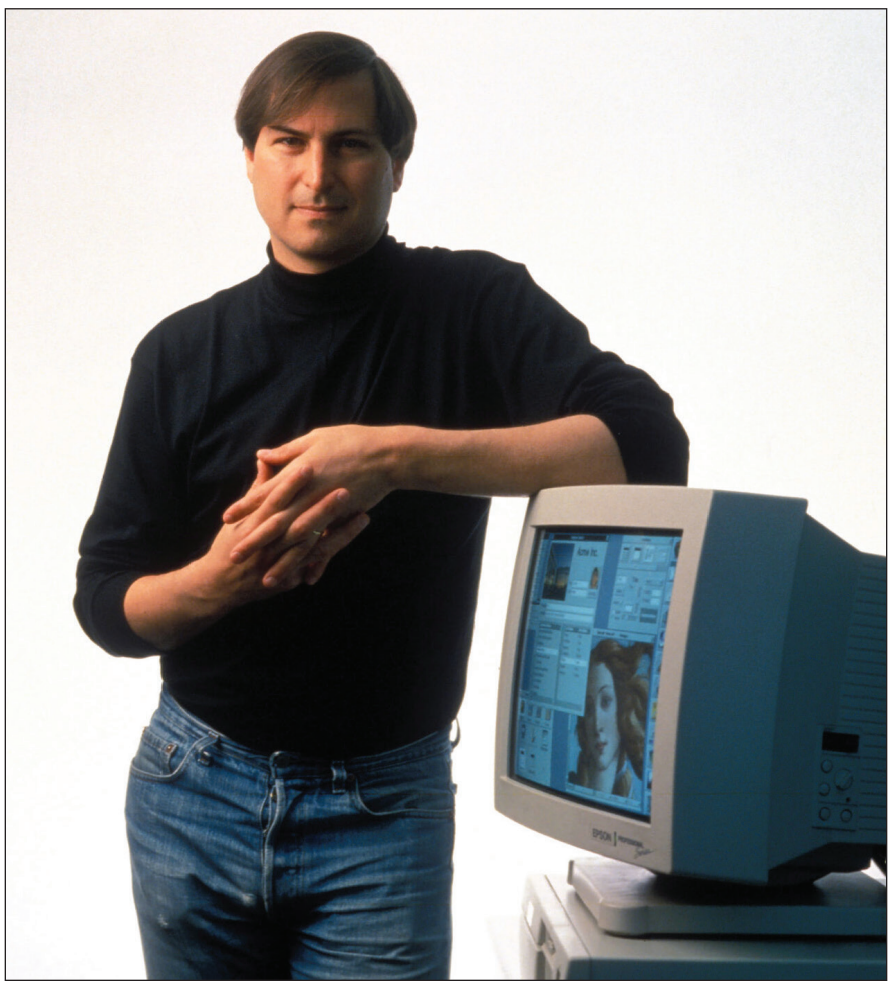
By creating well-designed products that blur the lines between work and enjoyment, Apple helped foster an emotional connection to the brand, he said. The company's strong stance on privacy and security has cultivated trust among legions of its fans who line up at Apple's retail stores to buy its latest products.

"Every company claims to strive for excellence. It's just a trope. But, man, you go inside Apple and talk to these people, and it's almost a mania. It's intense to work at Apple. A lot is expected of you," said David Pogue, a journalist and author of "Apple: The First 50 Years."

This attention to detail is apparent in Apple's products.

When Apple built a way for people to unlock their devices with their faces, the company tested the technology at Harley-Davidson motorcycle rallies and even hired Hollywood special effects artists to ensure life-like masks couldn't spoof its facial recognition system, Pogue said.

Pogue's book, released ahead of Apple's anniversary, goes through Apple's long history, chronicling the company's key players – including Jobs' leadership style and temper – and the challenges it faced as it rose to the top.



Robert Holmgren / ZUMA Wire / TNS

Steve Jobs, 39, CEO and co-founder of Apple Computer Corporation, in 1994. Jobs is leaning on a monitor, which is on top of his then-newest product: the Apple Power Macintosh 6100, a revolutionary workstation-class personal computer line.

"Apple's story is an epic tale of frenetic all-nighters and creative rebellion," he wrote in his book. "Of titanic successes (iPods, iPhones, iPads) and instructive failures (Lisa, Apple III, MobileMe). Of funny, idealistic, scary-smart workaholics – coming up on three generations of them – who want to make things better by making things better. It's about management, marketing, and strategy – and also about creativity, drive, and obsession."

Apple went through periods of financial trouble and uncertainty.

In the 1990s, the company laid off a third of its workforce and was days away from bankruptcy before the return of Jobs, who left the company in 1985 after clashing with the board and then-Chief Executive John Sculley.

In 2011, Jobs died of pancreatic cancer at 56, fueling more uncertainty around the company's future. Apple has faced scrutiny over working conditions at Chinese factories where Apple devices and other electronics are produced.

The company had massive breakout moments of success, including the release of the iPhone in 2007, outpacing rivals such as BlackBerry and sparking the shift to smartphones.

"Apple kept up with it all. Apple was always flexible," Wozniak said. "Now we've got so many different avenues, from the surfaces to other machines and AirPods and all that."

The secret to the company's success was it managed its brand well and didn't make "lousy junk" that breaks down, he said.

The tech giant – which is building a new office complex in Culver City – also expanded its footprint into Hollywood in 2019 with the launch of Apple TV+, the streaming service known for such TV shows as " Severance, " "The Morning Show" and the comedy "Ted Lasso." In 2022, it became the first streamer to win an Academy Award for best picture for family drama "CODA."

Apple, known for looking forward, took time to reflect and celebrate its half-century.

Earlier in March, Apple held a surprise concert featuring artist and producer Alicia Keys, who performed at its Grand Central Store in New York.

The company has held celebrations in different parts of the world, showcasing artists in China, Korea, Thailand, the United Kingdom and Mexico as well.

Apple worked with artists to light up the Sydney Opera House in Australia with art designed on the iPad.

"Through every breakthrough, one idea has guided us – that the world is moved forward by people who think different," wrote Tim Cook, Apple's chief executive, in a public letter about the milestone.

It's not just Apple that's been celebrating.

In January, RR Auction held an auction to celebrate the anniversary that included rare items such as Jobs' bedroom desk and bow ties. A 1976 check signed by Jobs and Wozniak before the founding of Apple and an Apple I computer prototype board each sold for more than $2 million, according to the auction's website.

The Computer History Museum in Mountain View, Calif., has been hosting events and opened a new exhibit to celebrate Apple's anniversary.

Inside the museum, rare prototypes of Apple products, including its personal computers and smartphones, were on display to showcase the Silicon Valley powerhouse's long journey. A wooden Apple I case, a clear acrylic Macintosh, a large iPod prototype and other items from Apple's past fill the room.

Earlier this month, Pogue hosted a sold-out evening event that featured key people in Apple's history, including its former chief executive Sculley.

Wayne, the Apple co-founder who left the company days after its founding, also made a rare appearance. He departed from Apple early, he said, because he thought it was too financially risky.

"If the whole thing came unglued, Jobs and Woz didn't have two nickels to rub together, so who are they going to come after? Obviously. And I didn't feel that I could stand the risk of such a disaster," he said.

Sculley, who became Apple's chief executive in 1983 and held the position for a decade, was initially reluctant to leave PepsiCo, but Jobs eventually persuaded him.

"He said, 'Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?'" Sculley said on stage.

Today, the world is very different, and technology has evolved.

The rise of artificial intelligence that can generate text and images has prompted anxiety about the future. And it's spurring the creation of hardware such as smartglasses and robots.

But AI can also create problems such as "deepfakes" that make it seem like a person is saying something or doing something they're not, Wozniak noted.

People spend a lot of time scrolling through videos on social media, addicted to their phones instead of interacting with their friends and family.

"The world is run by people who want to sell things," Wozniak said. "They're not going to let us get away from that."

Apple is also contending with the AI race and is seen to be trailing. Meanwhile, there are questions swirling around when Cook, 65, will retire.

For now, Apple appears positioned well, analysts said.

"I see Apple being able to weather the current pressures at least for the foreseeable future," said Bourne, the eMarketer analyst.

THE RISE OF THE SKILLCATION

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

Travel trends in 2026 include immersive and experiential travel along with mindful, wellness, off-peak travel and a strong focus on authenticity, nature and cultural engagement.

Add one more to the mix – the skillcation.

Skillcations consist of a blend of skill + vacation. While a regular vacation tends to focus on relaxation or sightseeing, a skillcation adds some structured learning or practice to the equation. The "why" of this type of vacation has to do with travelers looking for personal growth and relaxation combined, a more meaningful travel experience, networking with like-minded learners and returning home with a tangible new ability or improving on their current skillset.

Here are some destinations stepping up to the plate to give travelers a taste of what they're looking for.

Learn to be a cowboy or cowgirl

Saddle up! Booking a package stay at Tombstone Monument Ranch in Tucson, Arizona includes lodging, meals (such as a chuckwagon breakfast), horseback riding and ranch activities like gathering and driving cattle, branding, ear tagging and branding calves, fixing fences, and checking wells, cattle ponds and more.

Forest bathing & mindful nature immersion

Nestled in the heart of California wine country, Alila Napa Valley offers a quietly, luxurious farmhouse-meets-modern retreat where restorative wellness rituals and nature immersions are thoughtfully designed to connect guests to Napa's landscape. Home to the largest collection of coastal redwoods in Napa Valley, the hotel offers re-connecting with the grounding rhythms of the natural world through guided forest bathing within nearby Bothe-Napa Valley State Park.

Fly fishing

The Meadows on Rock Creek, a ten-cabin, all-inclusive resort in Western Montana offers the perfect destination to learn fly fishing. With direct access to an incredibly well-stocked creek, sporting one of the best fly-fishing conditions in the Big Sky state, guests can join walk-and-wade fishing trips led by skilled guides that include all necessary equipment.

Kitesurfing in Baja

About 45 minutes south of La Paz, the small beach town of La Ventana has become of the best places in North America to learn kitesurfing. Set along the Sea of Cortez, this former fishing village is known for its steady El Norte winds, especially in winter, when consistent breezes create ideal conditions for building real skills on the water. For travelers looking for a more immersive experience, Chilochill Glamping Resort pairs kitesurf lessons with easy, comfortable lodging just steps from the beach.

Learn to play the ukulele

At Sheraton Kauai Coconut Beach Resort, guests have the opportunity to take a little "aloha" spirit back home with them to share with family and friends by taking a complimentary ukulele class on property with a Hawaiian cultural teacher.

Learning to surf

There's nothing better than learning to surf on gentler waves. At the historic Hotel del Coronado in Southern California, top instructors hand-picked by world-famous pro-surfer Jamie O'Brien known for his mastery of Pipeline on Oahu's North Shore, guide beginner surfers in calm Pacific waters of the bay with instruction in this first and only O'Brien surf school on the U.S. mainland.

Mastering the trades of the Old West

At the Rocky Mountain Folk School in Grand County, Colorado, travelers move beyond simple crafts into technical trades which include woodworking, boot-making, saddle leatherwork and with an indigenous angle, learning to shape stone tools and arrowheads using ancient techniques.

Capture destinations like a pro

From snapping breaching whales in Alaska to chasing the Northern Lights, travelers are turning their vacations into photography masterclasses as searches for "travel photography" surges 5,000 percent according to Google Trends. Natural Habitat Adventures offers over 30 new trips in ultra-photogenic settings. National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions offers sailings with National Geographic Photographers and pro gear onboard, giving guests hands-on coaching in some of the world's most dynamic marine environments.

Bee keeping

Travelers can step into the fascinating world of the honeybee through a hands-on beekeeping experience at The Inn at Stonecliffe on Mackinaw Island. Led by local Michigan beekeeper, Dave Zimmerman, the experience includes guests suiting up in beekeeping gear to learn about the raw honey-making process from nectar to jar.

Learn to sail in paradise

With steady trade winds, calm turquoise waters, and a deep-rooted maritime culture, Bermuda stands out as one of the best places in the world to learn how to sail.

Skillcations consist of a blend of skill + vacation and adds some structured learning or practice to the equation.
Casey Mccallister / Dreamstime / TNS

First-timers build confidence in protected inshore waters before advancing to open-ocean techniques. The Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club runs year-round learn-to-sail programs for both youth and adults, while the Bermuda Sailing Association offers multi-day and weeklong courses across the island, including youth camps and adult programs at local yacht clubs. For more advanced sailors, the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club Sailing Academy is the island's first Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Training Center, delivering internationally recognized certifications.

Banana winemaking

Traditional urwagwa, or banana wine, is a staple in Rwanda at social gatherings. From weddings to traditional ceremonies, the process has a long history in this African region made from fermented bananas. At Hemingways Retreat Kigali, guests can opt to participate in their hands-on banana wine-making experience to learn the process and craft their own urwagwa. The workshop offers cultural insights into the quintessentially Rwandan experience, providing cultural insights and a unique skill to bring home.

Regenerative farming

Spier Wine Farm and Hotel in Stellenbosch, South Africa offers participants the chance to explore the farm's Food Garden and learn how permaculture and regenerative farming principles can restore soil health and improve the quality of food.

Guided by members of the garden team, guests are introduced to natural techniques like companion planting, crop rotation, and cover cropping, along with the use of worm compost and foliar sprays that enrich the soil. Informal workshops focus on practical skills such as composting kitchen scraps, improving soil at home, and growing herbs and vegetables using these methods.

Pasta making

Nestled in an expansive and stunning estate in California's Sonoma County, Bricoleur Vineyards allows guests to enjoy immersive experiences that include a gardening class, and the very popular Pasta Making, led by Bricoleur's Culinary Kitchen pasta chef, River Robinson. Attendees will learn how to incorporate natural ingredients to created colored pasta and transform their dough into shapes and ribbons in this hands-on culinary offering.

Finding *adventures* in *Armenia*

By MARLISE KAST-MYERS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Photos by Benjamin Myers / TNS

The Cafesjian Center for the Arts anchors the iconic Cascade, a pyramid-shaped complex doubling as one of Yerevan's most important cultural spaces.

Just outside Alaverdi, Mendz Er Cave (Big Cave) houses a small museum beside a restaurant overlooking Debed Canyon.

There's this habit I have, of looking at a map and selecting countries I know little about. Such was the case with Armenia, except for a reel that teased hiking, winemaking, and a cultural renaissance that made me want to visit the country in the Caucasus sooner than later.

My husband Benjamin agreed to join my crusade for trails and grapes, and away we went, landing in Yerevan, the capital and largest city in Armenia. Despite the 1 AM arrival, jetlag had us wired, chatting up our driver about everything from politics to population. Nodding, he asked Chat GPT for answers.

Armenia has a national population of roughly 3 million, of which Yerevan houses roughly a third. As we rolled into our hotel, it seemed the majority of Yerevanites were out that night. Even in the lobby of The Alexander, the bellman explained Armenia's a late-to-bed, late-to-rise culture. Winking at my husband, I knew we were off to a good start.

Beyond the marble lobby and crystal chandeliers was an elevator that took us to our room, where turndown service left a platter of dried apricots, peaches, and plums. That night we slept deep, clouded in luxurious Frette linens, heated floors, and metallic silk pillows.

Acclimating our senses was rooftop breakfast served by a gracious staff who introduced us to Armenian coffee – finely ground into a powder and brewed in a jazzve pot. Ruby pomegranate juice brightened the table beside yogurt, figs, honey, olives, pastries, brined cheeses (chanakh and lori), cured beef (basturma), and other local delights.

Following breakfast, we met Lusine Guin Dalera, our guide and owner of Next Is Armenia. During COVID, she launched her business, which gained traction with viral videos introducing the other side of Armenia. Over the next five days, she would be our driver, translator, historian, and magician unveiling that "other side."

Within minutes, the entrepreneur was walking us through Yerevan – one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Lusine rattled off dates and facts, as if reading a history book that had yet to be finished. Founded nearly 2,800 years ago, Yerevan became the capital of the Armenian republic in 1918. Situated at the crossroads of empires – from Persian and Roman to Byzantine, Arab, and Ottoman – it has long been shaped by conquest and survival. At first glance, their story of resilience wasn't something that could be seen.

At the center of the action was Republic Square, ringed by government buildings and the History Museum, with a collection of roughly 400,000 artifacts, documents, and archaeological findings including the world's oldest leather shoe, from 3500 BCE.

Outside the museum, Lusine pointed out neoclassical-style architecture in pink and yellow tufa stone, harmonizing with waterfalls, fountains, and pools in an urban ensemble. Webbing from grand facades were narrow streets where cats sunned in doorways and artisans claimed corners for their craft, unfolding a space of inclusive second chances.

We saw it in the hand-chiseled crosses (khachkars), symbols of faith intricately carved from volcanic tuff. Lusine waved us into an unattended shack, sheltered by tarp walls housing half-a-dozen of these works in progress. Centering each crucifix was an eternal knot representing the strength of the Armenian faith. Long before Christianity spread across Europe, Armenia quietly became the first nation to adopt it in 301 AD. It was a decision that still shapes the landscape today. We saw it firsthand over lunch at Tumanyan's ART.

It was the coffee and stuffed flatbreads (zhengyalov hats) that lured us to this neighborhood restaurant, but a heart of hope that left us in tears. At the center of it all was owner, Kristina Balayan, who served us dolmas, trout, pickled vegetables, roasted potatoes, lubu shorva (red bean soup) and other specialties.

Before Balayan opened her restaurant in Yerevan, Tumanyan ART stood in Stepanakert, Artsakh's capital. It operated as a restaurant and school for children with special needs. After the 2020 "44-Day War" reshaped the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) region, renewed fighting in September 2023 led to the displacement of Artsakh's population.

Among those in the crossfire was Kristina, who refused to close her restaurant during the nine-month blockade. Instead, the cafe became a place of sustenance where she improvised daily with the few supplies she had. Despite the mass exodus, Kristinia stayed behind to feed the hungry, becoming one of the last to travel through the Lachin Corridor.

Upon arriving in Yerevan, Kristina joined World Central Kitchen to feed the displaced, eventually opening Tumanyan's ART in December 2023. From orphans to widows, thousands of Armenians have found nourishment from this community protagonist, who is still comforting children who habitually ration their birthday cake.

Still, Kristina pours us wine and insists on raising a glass to "peace."

I didn't know how, having endured all that, Armenians had the courage to find joy. But as Lusine explained, "We can't live in fear of today simply because the uncertainty of tomorrow."

In Saryan Square, it seemed people were finding that joy, artists setting up easels and brushing color on canvases in this living gallery. Just off the Yerevan Opera House, this vibrant square celebrated Armenia's deep ties to France, with Parisian-style cafes, a statue of Charles Aznavour (the "French Sinatra"), and flower carts stacked with fresh roses – so perfectly petaled, you'd swear they were photoshopped into life.

Just uphill, the Cafesjian Center for the Arts anchored the iconic Cascade, a pyramid-shaped complex doubling as one of Yerevan's most important cultural spaces. Outside were tiered fountains with views spanning across the city to Mount Ararat. At the base of the terraces were sculpture gardens featuring Fernando Botero's chubby bronze feline El Gato and Ji Yong-Ho's black Lion, assembled from recycled tires.

By sunset we were counting fibers at the Megerian Carpet Museum. Ironically, the famed business launched in New York, where Armenian immigrant Hovannes John Megerian started restoring rugs in 1917. Leaning on natural dyes and double-knot methods, he revitalized the craft and established a cultural hub in Armenia with factories, museums, and showrooms. With over 22 weaving facilities across the country, Megerian has become a major force in preserving the heritage. On their client list was everyone from Pope Francis to Kim Kardashian.

From carpet factories to blanketed hillsides, we headed north into the Debed River Valley, where cool misty air smelled of fire and fruit. Located in Armenia's Lori Province, the deep gorge stretches from Vanadzor to the Georgian border. Cradled in the hillsides are UNESCO-listed monasteries and centuries-old settlements, drawing more visitors than the trails and rivers below. We came for all of the above, with history before hiking, starting with the Sanahin Monastery.

Founded in the 10th century, this complex of churches was a crucible of wisdom for calligraphers, philosophers, and illuminators. Despite the passing of time, rays of light broke into the darkness through crowned domes and arched windows.

Nearby was Haghpat Monastery, also named a UNESCO World Heritage site as the pinnacle of Armenian architecture. Among gravesites and crooked slabs, this medieval tapestry of bell towers, vaulted corridors, and sacred frescoes whispered tales of faith and persecution.

Just outside Alaverdi, Mendz Er Cave (Big Cave) was next on our route. Once believed to have sheltered early humans, the cave now housed a museum beside a restaurant, where we lunched on wraps and clay-pot stews reminiscent of shepherds' fondue.

While admiring views across Debed Canyon, I heard the cry of a kitten, meowing for scraps and making figure eights between my husband's boots. In Armenia, strays are often tagged, a sign they have been neutered and released. Regardless, I wanted to save them all . . . feed, heal, and take them home. The more I learned about Armenia, the more I wanted to rescue it from the past. But Armenia didn't need rescuing. It needed understanding.

Just ask Vigen Mnatsakanyan, owner of ARMBEE Honey Farm and Meadery. Fifteen years ago, the beekeeper inherited two hives from his grandfather in Alaverdi. Today Vigen is considered the swami of the craft, with more than 300 hives, an education center, smart hive software and a boutique hotel with "bee beds" for apitherapy. He shared his vision to open a honey-centric restaurant, and in the meantime, we sampled from the comb and wine that convinced us Vigen could save the world, one bee at a time.

That evening, we checked into the Tufenkian Avan Dzoraget Hotel, which resembles a medieval Armenian fortress, its stone architecture melded into the Debed River. Rooms boasted arched doorways, stone flooring, and handwoven Tufenkian carpets.

By day we hiked from Kobayr Monastery to Odzun Church, our trail slicing through the gorge past ruins of Horomayr – one of 4,000 religious structures in Armenia. Holding the pack was our guide from Hike Armenia, who corralled us through the verdant passage while pointing out rhythms of rural life. Farmers gathered walnuts into leather pouches beside hedgerows laden with berries, pears, plums, and Cornelian cherries.

Our trek ended in the village of Odzun, famous for its church constructed around the fifth to seventh centuries. Beyond religion, we visited the local TUMO center, Armenia's free technology program for teens – a reminder that even in one of the country's oldest landscapes, the future was being quietly shaped.

That night over dinner, the electricity suddenly went out; an anomaly for us, a common occurrence for them. Our guide Lusine didn't miss a beat, telling us about Armenia's exports of precious metals, tea, and brandy, and how river rafting was best May to October. I looked around, as conversation continued without pause or panic.

Candles were delivered tableside, and I had to ask about the absence of discomfort and chaos.

"This was all we knew during the 'Cold and Dark Years,'" Lusine said.

In the early 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, electricity in Yerevan flickered for as little as an hour a day. Lusine recounted days of homework by candlelight and the cheers when light would return. Daily life was reshaped during the energy crisis with the shutdown of Armenia's nuclear plant, frozen rivers preventing hydroelectricity and blockades cutting natural gas.

"Winters were brutal," she explained. "But we never complained because there was always someone enduring more."

Babies were delivered in darkness, entire neighborhoods huddled in one warm home, and trees disappeared from parks with each "giving tree" chopped for firewood. The hardships sparked mass emigration and economic collapse, leaving an even deeper mark – one that still surfaces in quiet dinners with strangers like us.

The following morning echoed that past, a drive along barren roads dotted with abandoned factories. Climbing toward 4,600 feet, we headed to Tavush Province toward Apaga Resort in Yenokavan. Opened in 2003, this property in the clouds had cozy rooms in freestanding structures. Outside were grazing horses, raising their heads at nothing greener than the earth.

Yell Extreme Park was part of the property, a hub for adventure with horseback riding, zip lining, rock climbing, off-roading and hiking. Elaborate meals were served in a glass-walled restaurant overlooking the valley, where paper-thin lavash came with platters of tree mushrooms, lamb and trout.

As the trip drew to a close, we stopped at Haghartsin Monastery, where Lusine lured us with gata, flaky Armenian pastries filled with blueberry, lemon and figs. Beyond those fragrant fillings was a rich history of the monastery dating back to the 10th century. Once favored by scientists and royalty, Haghartsin now holds the graves of kings.

En route, we learned about Armenia's wine renaissance, now guided in part by Vahe Keushguerian, considered the godfather of Armenian winemaking. As owner of the Keush winery, Vahe and his daughter Aimee helped shift the industry from survival to intention.

Investment followed, as did renewed interest at home and abroad, fueled in part by discoveries at Areni Cave, one of the world's oldest winemaking sites. In Vayots Dzor Highlands, winemakers at Trinity Canyon vineyards are returning to organic practices, fermenting wines in clay amphorae, and embracing styles like amber wines. From what was only a handful of drinkable wines, Armenia now produces more than 500 native grape varieties.

Heading back to Yerevan, we stopped for lunch at Sevan Yasaman Restaurant on the shores of Lake Sevan. As the country's largest lake, it's often called "The Pearl of Armenia." Clouds rolled in, darkening the water and bringing in a storm we never predicted.

Our timing was off. Back on the highway, the rearview mirror showed the clouds had lifted, the waters were still, and a rainbow had arched across the sky.

"We need to stop," I told Lusine. "This is the best photo of the trip!"

She explained there was no exit, no shoulder, and no way to turn back. A guardrail was blocking the view, and so, we had to admire the moment from where we stood.

The irony wasn't lost on me.

Within reach was the color of hope, in a land where borders have meaning, where honey flows and fruit ripens under a generous sun; where wine isn't a trend but rather a reclaiming of something ancient to be reshaped for the present; where stone churches rise from volcanic hills, monasteries cling to cliffs, and crosses are carved with eternal knots that strengthen with pull and tension.

Where monuments translate to "We are our mountains" and warriors raise a glass to peace; where resilience is not learned but rather intrinsic, in a country where, yes, at first glance, that story cannot be seen ... but with time, it can be understood.